







A  
HISTORY OF BENGALI  
LITERATURE

BY  
K. N. DAS,  
Author of *Rabindranath :*  
*His Mind and Art.*

"Literature is fast becoming all in all to us—our  
church, our senate, our whole social constitution."—

Carlyle.

PUBLISHED BY  
DAS BROTHERS,  
NAOGAON, RAJSHAHI,  
BENGAL.



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Printed by the **ORIENTAL PRINTERS & PUBLISHERS, LTD.**  
26-9-1A, Harrison Road, CALCUTTA.

“पिता स्वर्गः पिता धर्माः पिता हि परमस्तपः ।”

IN MEMORY  
OF  
MY REVERED PARENTS  
TARAK NATH DAS  
AND  
GIRIBALA DEVI

“जननी जन्मभूमिश्च स्वर्गादपि गरीयसी ।”



# NOTE

The meteoric triumphs of Tagore's poetry must have awakened in all parts of the civilised world a real desire to know the up-to-date history of Bengali Literature. But so far as the present writer is aware, there is no work of the kind in the English or Bengali language to serve this purpose. With a view to meet this demand, the writer has taken upon himself the task of writing, in the manner of a Home University publication, a handy volume on the subject. But how far he has been successful in the venture, it is for the literary world at large to judge. He will, however, deem his labours amply requited, if this publication succeeds in giving a fair idea of the leading traits and tendencies of Bengali Literature from the earliest upto modern times and thus serves the purpose of a general introduction to the subject.

In the preparation of this volume—especially in the preparation of the History of Old Bengali Literature—the writer has derived help from some writers—particularly Dr. D. C. Sen, author of *Banga Bhasa o Sahitya*; but his mode of treatment is throughout independent and his literary opinions not infrequently quite his own. The History of Modern Bengali Literature is a new thing and will, it is hoped, evoke some new interest in literary circles.

K. N. DAS.

NAOGAON.  
1-1-25.

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## Literature and Art

1. "All that is best in the great poets of all countries is not what is national in them but what is universal." Longfellow.

2. "A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth." Lessing.

3. "A poet must be before his age to be even with posterity." Lowell.

4. "Ancient art corporealises the spiritual ; modern spiritualises the corporeal." Borne,

5. "Beauty is the highest principle and the highest aim of art." Goethe.

6. "Criticism is an disinterested endeavour to laern and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world." Mathew Arnold.

7. "Every author, in some degree, portrays himself in his works, be it even against his will." Goethe,

8. "Every great and original writer, in proportion he is great or original, must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished." Wordsworth.

9. "Personality is everything in art and poetry." Goethe.

10. "Poetry is musical thought, thought of a mind that has penetrated into the inmost heart of a thing, detected the melody that lies hidden in it the heart of Nature being everywhere music, if you can only reach it." Carlyle.

11. "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." Disraeli.

12. "Generally speaking, an author's style is a faithful copy of his mind. If you would write a lucid style, let there first be light in your own mind; and if you write a grand style, you ought to have a grand character." Goethe.

13. Goethe explained literature as "the humanization of the whole world."

14. Silence is the element in which great things fashion themselves together; that at length they may emerge, full-formed and majestic, into the daylight of life, which they are thenceforth to rule., Carlyle.

15. "Whatever in literature, art or religion is done for money is poisonous itself, and doubly deadly in preventing the hearing or seeing of the noble literature and art which have been done for love and truth." Ruskin.

# A HISTORY OF BENGALI LITERATURE

## 1. THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE BENGALI LANGUAGE.

1. Our mother tongue originated more than a thousand years ago from an old type of Magadhi Prakrit, which was related to Sanskrit in much the same way as Italian to Latin, characteristically avoiding conjunct consonants and preferring final vowels. The following table will elucidate the remark—

BENGALI	PRAKRIT	SANSKRIT
Hati (elephant)	Hatthi	Hasti
Pathar (stone)	Patthar	Prastar
Bau (wife)	Bahu	Badhu
Kam (work)	kamma	Karma
Dai (curd)	Dahi	Dadhi
Bari (home)	Bari	Bati
Chand (moon)	Chanda	Chandra
Bhat (boiled rice)	Bhatta	Bhaktam
etc.	etc.	



2. Though Bengali is an offshoot of Magadhi Prakrit, yet the influence of the Persian and Arabic languages upon its growth cannot be ignored. During the Mahomedan rule, many Persian and Arabic words naturally crept into and formed part and parcel of our language. As instances in point, the following words may be cited—Ain ( *law* ), Doat ( *inkpot* ), Kalam ( *pen* ), Kagaj ( *paper* ), Rashid ( *receipt* ), Jami ( *land* ), Sahar ( *town* ), Habildar, Najir etc.

3. As a consequence of the British suzerainty in India for more than a century and a half, many English words have passed into and become naturalized in our tongue. Words of this type are—*Rail, Minute, Mile, Gas, Novel, School, College, Summons etc.*

4. “A cursory examination of the Bengali alphabet will convince our readers that it is derived and simplified from the Devanagri alphabet. This modification was made many centuries ago, and all that exists of Bengali literature from the time of Chandidas and Kasiram was recorded in this modern Bengali alphabet”. (R. C. Dutt’s “Literature of Bengal.”) Dr. D. C. Sen is of opinion that the Bengali script is older

than the Devanagiri script and that the inscription of Chandra Verma discovered by Nagendra Nath Basu furnishes the form of the Bengali alphabet so far back as the 4th century A. D.

5. The last Census returns show that Bengali is now the mother tongue of about fifty millions of men—it is next to Hindi, the most widely used dialect in India. The learning of Bengali by foreign scholars like Sylvain Levi points to its growing importance in inter-national literary circles.

## 2. BENGALI POETRY.

### A. The Buddhist Era (800 A.D.—1200 A.D.)

Mahamahopadhyaya Hara Prasad Sastri published some ten years back *Bauddha Gan O Doha* from Mss. obtained in Nepal. This book of precepts & lays of Buddhist divines and monks is, in his opinion, written in the oldest known Bengali. But this assumption is challenged by a considerable volume of respectable opinion. The book is divided into four parts or rather booklets—*Charyacharya Binischaya, Sarojbajrer Dohakosh*

*Kahnapader Dohakosh* and *Dakarnab*—and is permeated out and out with Buddhist sentiments. It is written in Sandhyabhasa or the twilight language where sense and mystery are mingled as light and shade in twilight. It is, if not the oldest, one of the oldest of Bengali books, indicating across the vista of centuries the main links and threads that connect our tongue with its parental stock. It forms an important landmark in the philological history of our literature and gives an interesting glimpse of the socio-religious history of Bengal in the Buddhist era. It is valuable alike to students of poetry, philology and Buddhalogy.

SHUNYA PURAN by Ramai Pandit, the songs of Manik Chand, the songs of Govinda Chandra and the epigrams of Dak and Khana are other early poems in our language—composed between 800 to 1200 A. D. An under-current of Buddhist ideas and tendencies runs through them, and they throw a flood of light upon the quaint manners and customs, current among our fore-fathers more than a thousand years ago. Lines like these of Ramai Pandit—“ধর্মরাজ যন্ত নিন্দা করে,” “শ্রীধর্মদেবতা সিংহলে বলত সম্মান”—and the following passage of

Govinda Chandra strike a distinct Buddhistic note—

“রাজা বলে কোন্ ধর্ম্য সব লোক তরে  
ইহার উত্তর গুরু গাজ্ঞা কর মোরে ।  
হাড়িপা কহেন বাছা শুন গোবিন্দাই ।  
অহিংসা পরম ধর্ম্য যার পর নাই ॥”

The study of the songs of Manik Chand and the epigrams of Dak and Khana shew that even the Brahmins of those days cultivated lands and that the women were fond of playing dice. We further gather therefrom that the people lived a most simple, unostentatious life and that they had great faith in astrology. The Charka-the Wheel of Fortune which Mahatmaji is trying to introduce in every Indian home to-day was then in extensive use in the country.

Judged from the artistic standpoint, the value of these folk-poems is very meagre. They appeal but little to the heart and the ear. Still as the first poems in our language, they have claims upon our attention. Some of the epigrams of Dak and Khana are widely current among the peasant-folk and country-women of Bengal.

Some well known epigrams of Khana :

wrote several Sanskrit poems—*Purusha Pariksha*, *Saiva Sarbbaswahar*, *Ganga Bakyalali*, *Durga Bhakti Tarangini* etc. But his chief glory as a poet rests on his matchless lyrics (Padas) in the Maithili dialect, dwelling allegorically on the relations of the human soul to God under the form of love, which Radha bore to Krishna. These lyrics were enthusiastically recited by the great reformer **Chaitanya Dev** about a century later.\* Later on, his poems were intoned into Bengali by a poet named Basanta Roy who flourished in the 16th century. Bengal has adopted Vidyapati as her own, though he wrote in the Maithili dialect.

The next Vaishnava poet was **Chandidas**. He was the contemporary of Vidyapati (and by a strange historical coincidence of 'Dan Chaucer'). He was born of a Brahmin family at Nannoor, a most beautiful hamlet in the District of Birbhum. There is a tradition current in Bengal (supported by quotations from the poet's writings) that the poet fell in love with a washer-woman named Rami, while the former served as priest and the

\*“চণ্ডীদাস বিদ্যাপতি রায়ের নাটকগীতি কর্ণামৃত শ্রীগীতগোবিন্দ ।  
স্বরূপ রামানন্দ সনে মহাপ্রভু রাতি দিনে শুনে পরম আনন্দ ॥

latter as maid-servant in the temple of Bashuli. This woman, if the tradition is to be trusted, furnished the poet with inspiration for writing songs.

Vidyapati and Chandidas once met together on the banks of the Ganges, each being captivated by the other's melody. \*

The burden of Chandidas's songs is the same as that of Vidyapati's—love of the human soul for the Divine under the symbolical relations of Radha and Krishna. But while Vidyapati delights to sing of union and joy, and excels in graphic vigour and choice of happy similes—images fresh as

“...the wash of Western seas

Full of the foam, full of the breeze,”

Chandidas depicts with greater felicity the intense pangs of separation and excels in painting simple beautiful pictures free from ornamental touches. Vidyapati depicts the freshness and warmth and Chandidas the depth and intensity of love. Vidyapati's language is full of Maithili words and archaisms, while Chandidas's bears a close

\*“ সময় বসন্ত বাম দিন মাঝি হি বটতলে সুরধনৌ তীর ।  
চণ্ডীদাস কবিরঞ্জে মিলল পুলক কলেবর গির ।।

resemblance to the language of our day. The devotional element in both reaches an acme of perfection seldom noticed in the range of the world's lyrical poetry. The melody of their rhythm has no parallel in Bengali poetry. The little carols of the lark and the linnet in the dim, dreamy hours of the early morning have the most pleasant effect upon the human ear, and so the auroral notes of these early Vaishnava lyrists have the

"Sweet Bidyapati ! Sweet Chandidas ! the earliest stars in the firmament of Bengali literature ! Long, long will your strains be remembered & sung in Bengal !—R. C. Dutt.

most exhilarating effect on every student of poetry. The personal note, which is altogether absent from our classical literature, was heard for the first time in them in all its clearness and fulness.

The reader will appreciate the force of the fore-going remarks if he go through the following strains—'notes of enchantment' of Vidyapati and Chandidas (we quote only the opening lines of each strain):

## Vidyapati.

“তাতল সৈকতে বারিবিন্দু সম, স্মৃতমিত্ত রমণী সমাজে  
তোহে বিসরি মন, তাহে সমর্পিনু, অব মঝ হব কোন্ কাজে ॥”

“মাধব বলত মিনতি করি তোয় ।

দেই তুলসী তিল, দেহ সমর্পিনু, দয়া জানি ছোড়বি মোয় ॥”

“যতনে যতেক ধন, পাপে বাঁটায়নু মেলি পরিজন খায় ।

মরণক বেরি হেরি, কোই না পুছই করম সঙ্গে চলি যায় ॥”

“নব বৃন্দাবন নবীন তরুগণ, নব নব বিকসিত ফুল ।

নবীন বসন্ত, নবীন মলয়ানিল, মাতল নব অলিকুল ॥”

“আজু রজনী হাম ভাগ্যে পোহায়নু পেখনু পিয়ামুখ চন্দা ।”

“সখি কি পুছসি মোয় ।

সেই পীরিতি

অনুরাগ বাখানিতে

তিলে তিলে নূতন হোয় ॥”

## Chandidas.

“অনেক সাধের পরাণ বাঁধুয়া নয়নে লুকায়ে থোব ।

প্রেম চিন্তামণির শোভা গাঁথিয়া হিয়ার মাঝারে লব ।”

“পিরিতি স্নেহের সাগর দেখিয়া নাহিতে নামিনু তায় ।

নাহিয়া উঠিয়া, ফিরিয়া উঠিতে লাগিল দুঃখের বায় ।”

“রসিক রসিক সবাই কহয়ে কেহ ত রসিক নয় ।”



“ঘরের বাহিরে, দণ্ডে শত বার তিলে আসে যায় ।  
মন উচাটন, নিশ্বাস সঘন, কদম্ব কাননে চায় ॥”

“More is meant than meets the ear” is the characteristic of these wood-notes, and they take the reader straight to that region where light and love, poetry and music, idea and emotion beautifully blend together and create a perennial spring of joy. They belong to the permanent song-literature of the world and are ‘a joy for ever.’

Vidyapati and Chandidas, like other great poets, are *untranslatable*; yet those who cannot read them in the original would do well to turn to the English rendering of their choicest pieces by the authors of *Vaishnava Lyrics* (Oxford University Press). Below are quoted the verse-translations of a couple of charming strains of Chandidas by our distinguished countryman R. C. Dutt :

“Friend ! who hath named that name ?  
Through my ear it steals,  
My heart it thrills  
My life and soul it doth inflame !  
Ah who shall tell,  
What sweet doth dwell  
In that beloved strain !

I name that name,  
 My soul's all flame  
 Oh ! will he come again ?" \*  
 'Love ! what more shall I say ?  
 In life, in death, in after-life  
 I'll be thy duteous wife.  
 Yes ! to thy feet my heart is tied  
 By silken ties of love.  
 I offer all,—my heart and soul ;  
 I'll be your doating slave !  
 I have thought if in this wide wide world  
 Another friend I own,  
 In loving tones to name my name  
 Alas ! Alas ! there's none !  
 In earth, in heaven, in after world,  
 Alas ! who loveth me ?  
 O ! to thy feet I turn for help,  
 To thee alone ! to thee !  
 O ! do not spurn me—I am weak  
 O ! do not turn away  
 I've thought and felt, without thy help  
 I have no other way.

---

\* “সই কেবা শুনাইল গ্রাম নাম ।  
 কানের ভিতর দিয়া মরমে পশিল গো  
 আকুল করিল মোর প্রাণ ।”

If for a moment thee I miss  
 A death-like trance I own ;  
 I'll keep and nurse thee on my heart  
 E'en as a precious stone !" \*

These renderings, though beautiful in their way, are far less charming than the original lines.

About half a century after Chandidas, SRI CHAITANYA (1486-1533), the celebrated religious reformer, was born of a Brahmin family at Navadwip, the greatest centre of learning in India, if not in the world at that time. He was the most consummate scholar of his time and had bright worldly prospects before him. But before he reached his twenty-fifth year, he forsook the world and its joys and becoming a Sanyasin preached the great doctrine of Bhakti (Love and Faith) throughout the length and breadth of India. "Krishna (God) is attainable through Love and not through learning or mechanical ritualism. Love Krishna such as Radha and her comrades did and love other men as your brothers irrespective of their caste and creed because they are all sons of Krishna—

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\* বঁধু কি আর বলিব আমি ।

মরণে জীবনে জনমে জনমে প্রাণনাথ হৈও তুমি ॥”

“সবহুঁ নাচত সবহুঁ গাহত সবহুঁ আনন্দে বাধিয়া ।

ভাবে কম্পিত লুঠত ভূতলে

বেকত গৌর কাঁতিয়া ॥

মধুর মঙ্গল মৃদঙ্গ বাজত

চলত কত কত ভাঁতিয়া ।

বদন গদ গদ মধুর হাসত,

খসত মোতিম পাঁতিয়া ॥

পতিত কোলে করি

বোলত হরি হরি দেওত পুনঃ যাচিয়া ।

অকুণ্ঠিম লোচনে, বরুণ ঝরতহি

এ তিন ভুবন ভাসিয়া ॥

এ স্থখ সাগরে লুবধ জগজ্জনে

মুগধ ইহ দিন রাতিয়া !

গোবিন্দ দাস রোয়ত অনুক্ষণ

বিন্দু কণা আধ লাগিয়া ॥”

“With all thy soul love God above”  
 And thyself thy neighbour love.”

—that was his message to the world. It voiced the lyric cry of the human soul for the divine. The response which this trumpet call for Love met with was simply marvellous. Rich or poor, literate or illiterate, Brahmin or pariah—all enthusiastically rallied under his banner and embraced Vaishnavism. Even the Mahomedans (of whom one turned out to be his chief disciple) were converted to his creed in large numbers.

The effects of such a tremendous religious upheaval upon the vernacular literature of Bengal can be easily imagined. It brought about a Renaissance in the domain of our poetry. About 200 Vaisnava poets,\* male and female, major and minor, sprang up in the country in two centuries and sang songs instinct with a warm religious fervour. We shall here take notice of the more remarkable of these poets only.

**Govindadas Karmakar**—An inhabitant of Kanchannagar in the Burdwan District, he left

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\* Of late, 425 old Bengali manuscripts have been made over to the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad by Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. They may lead to the discovery of many hitherto unknown Vaishnava poets.

his hearth and home in 1508 A. D. being severely taken to task by his wife for his indolent habits and lack of learning and became an attendant of Sri Chaitanya shortly after he had embraced *Sannyas*. He travelled with his master all over Southern India and jotted down short notes, which he afterwards developed into an elaborate poem. The following are the principal features of *Govindadas's Karacha*—

(1) It gives a most faithful picture of the every-day life of Chaitanya.

(2) It bristles with many valuable historical anecdotes and charming geographical sketches.

(3) It contains some fine touches of 'natural magic'—the word-pictures of the Nilgiri hills and Cape Comorin, for instance.

(4) It gives a plain unvarnished account of Govinda's life and character and his deep devotion to his master.

(5) It is written in a simple, homely style and is comprehensible even to the dullest understanding.

The picture of Chaitanya when seized with "Divine madness," as delineated in Govinda's *Karacha*, is very life-like and beautiful—

“কি কব প্রেমের কথা কহিতে ডরাই ।  
 এমন আশ্চর্য্য ভাব কভু দেখি নাই ॥  
 কৃষ্ণ হে বলিয়া ডাকে কথায় কথায় ।  
 পাগলের ন্যায় কভু ইতি উতি চায় ॥  
 কি জানি কাহারে ডাকে আকাশে চাহিয়া ।  
 কখন চমকি উঠে কি যেন দেখিয়া ॥  
 উপবাসে কেটে যায় দু এক দিন ।  
 অন্ন না খাইয়া দেহ হইয়াছে ক্ষীণ ॥  
 এক দিন গুপ্ত মধ্যে পঞ্চবটী বনে ।  
 ভিক্ষা হ’তে এসে মুই দেখি সঙ্গোপনে ॥  
 নিথর নিঃশব্দ সেই জন শূন্য বন ।  
 মাঝে মাঝে বাস করে দুই চারি জন ॥  
 বিম্ বিম্ করিতেছে বনের ভিতর ।  
 চক্ষু মুদি কি ভাবিছে গৌরাজ সুন্দর ॥  
 অঙ্গ হইতে বাহির হয়েছে রূপরাশি ।  
 ধ্যান করিতেছে মোর নবীন সন্ন্যাসী ॥”

**Jayananda Misra**—Son of Subuddhi Misra of Amaipur in the Burdwan District,—he saw the light between 1511 to 1513 A. D. His *Chaitanya Mangal* is more an historical document than a ‘poetical’ work in the real sense of the term. It furnishes the reader with a fresh theory

about the place of residence of Chaitanya's forefathers, gives a most credible account of Chaitanya's passing away and throws fresh light upon the drift of affairs at Navadvip previous to the birth of the saint.

In Jayananda's opinion, Chaitanya died of a wound received at the leg at the time of Sankirtan and the condition of Navadvip prior to his birth was almost anarchical, the Mahomedans persecuting the Hindus in a variety of ways—

“আর এক পুত্র হইল বিশ্বরূপ নাম ।

দুর্ভিক্ষ জন্মিল বড় নবদ্বীপ ধাম ॥

\* \* \*

আচম্বিতে নবদ্বীপ হৈল রাজভয় ;

ব্রাহ্মণ ধরিয়া রাজা জাতি প্রাণ লয় ॥

নবদ্বীপে শঙ্করানি শুনে যার ঘরে ।

ধন প্রাণ লয় তার জাতি নাশ করে ॥

কপালে তিলক দেখে যজ্ঞসূত্র স্কন্ধে ।

ঘর দ্বার লোটো তার সেই পাশে বান্ধে ॥

দেউল দেহবী ভাঙ্গে উপাড়ে তুলসী ।

প্রাণভয়ে স্থির নহে নবদ্বীপবাসী ॥

গঙ্গান্নান বিরোধিল হাটঘাট যত ।

কঙ্কণ পনস রত্ন কাটে শত শত ॥



পিরল্যা গ্রামেতে বৈসে যতেক যবন ।

উচ্ছন্ন করিল নবদ্বীপের ব্রাহ্মণ ॥”

Jayananda also wrote two minor poems—*Dhruba Charitra* and *Prahlad Charitra*.

**Brindaban Das**—Born in the first quarter of the 16th century at Navadwip, he was a most ardent and enthusiastic follower of Sri Chaitanya. His *Chaitanya Bhagabat* is written on the same plan as *Sreemat Bhagabat*. Chaitanya has been depicted herein as God incarnate, the object of his birth being stated to be the same as that of Krishna—to protect the virtuous and annihilate the wrong-doers.\*

The historical value of *Chaitanya Bhagabat* despite its supernatural colouring, is not meagre. The poem throws light upon many obscure social and political questions of the day. The picture of Chaitanya as delineated in the poem is occasionally supremely beautiful. Such, for instance, is the picture of the reformer when he went to and came back from Gaya.

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\* The annihilation of the wrong-doers in Chaitanya's case is his scoring victory over and converting to Vaishnavism many learned but arrogant atheists.

*Chaitanya Bhagabat* is divided into three parts. The first part begins with the birth of the reformer and ends in his pilgrimage to Gaya. The second part extends upto his embracing Sannyas. The third part records the subsequent events of his career. This part appears to be a bit incomplete.

The diction of the poem is very simple. The shower of harsh abuses flung by the poet on the Non-Vaishnavites (due, of course, to provocation) is the only lamentable feature of *Chaitanya Bhagabat*. It ill becomes a Vaishnava whose motto is universal love to show intolerance.

Krishnadas Kaviraj, the great philosophical-critic, calls Brindaban Das "The Vyas of *Chaitanya Lila*." Brindaban wrote *Nityananda Barsabali* and many little lyrics which have been collected in *Pada Kalpa Taru* and other anthologies of the time. We quote here one of these lyrics—

“চলে নিজ প্রেম ভরে, দিগ উলমল করে,  
 পদভরে অবনী দোলায় ।  
 আধ আধ বানি কহে, মুখের বাহির নহে,  
 নিজ পরিষদে গুণ গায় ॥

দেখে ভাই অবনী মণ্ডলে নিত্যানন্দ ।  
 গোরা মুখ হেরি কত বাড়য়ে আনন্দ ॥  
 পরিধানে নীল ধটী, আঁটনি না রহে কটি,  
 অন্তর ভাবে বাহ্য নাহি জানে ।  
 অঙ্গ হেরি হেরি চলে, গৌর গৌর বলে  
 নিশি দিশি আর নাহি জানে ॥  
 যুগে যুগে রাম, স্বজন প্রতিপালক,  
 পাষণ্ডীরে করিতে বিনাশ ।  
 শ্রীকৃষ্ণ চৈতন্য, ঠাকুর শ্রীনিত্যানন্দ  
 গুণ গায় বৃন্দাবন দাস ॥”

**Lochan Das**—Born of a Vaidya family in 1523 at Kogram, an obscure village in the Burdwan District, **Trilochan Das** (for that was the poet's full name) wrote three long poems—*Chaitanya Mangal*, *Durlava Sar*, *Ananda Latika*—of which the first is the most notable.

Chaitanya has been delineated as God from start to finish in *Chaitanya Mangal* and as such, the work is lamentably lacking in human interest. The only fascinating feature of the poem is its fine word-music, which is decidedly sweeter than that of Govindadas, Brindaban Das and

Krishnadas Kaviraj, other great biographers of the saint.

Lochan Das died in 1580.

Besides the three long poems mentioned above, he composed many little lyrics which are noted for their exquisite melody.

The picture of Chaitanya in his childhood has been delineated in the following lines in *Chaitanya Mangal*—

“এই মতে দিনে দিনে শচীর কুমার ।  
 বাড়য়ে শরীর যেন অমিয়ার সার ॥  
 কি দিব উপমা রূপের না দিলে সে নারী ।  
 খল বল করে প্রাণ কহিতে না পারি ॥  
 নিতি ষোল কলা পূর্ণ ইন্দুমুখ চন্দ্র ।  
 সাধে দেখিবার ধায় জনমের অঙ্ক ॥  
 একে সে অধর রাতা মুচকি হাসিতে ।  
 অমিয় সাগরে যেন হিল্লোল খেলিতে ॥  
 রসে ডুবু ডুবু রাতা নয়ন যুগল ।  
 কাজরে অমিয়া পঙ্কে কে বান্ধ বান্ধল ॥  
 শচী পুণ্যবতী জগন্নাথ ভাগ্যবান ।  
 সাদরে নিরিখে হেন পুত্রের বয়ান ॥

ক্ৰণে কঁাদে ক্ৰণে হাসে ক্ৰণে খটি করে ।

ক্ৰণে কোলে ক্ৰণে দোলে হিয়ার উপরে ॥ ”

**Krishnadas Kaviraj**—Born probably in 1517 of a Vaidya family at Jhamatpur in the Burdwan District, Krishnadas wrote many Sanskrit and Bengali books of which *Chaitanya Charitamrita* is a monumental work. Whether studied as an authentic history of Chaitany's time or studied as a simple yet scholarly exposition of Neo-Vaishnavism this poem is a master piece, being a marked improvement upon the previous life-sketches of the reformer. Chaitanya has been depicted herein as he was in real life—as a man gradually rising to the level of a god—and that in a very cogent and well-reasoned manner. The discussions of the saint with Digbijayee, Ramananda and other learned scholars have been admirably set forth. In fine, *Chaitanya Charitamrita* is the one work in the Mediaeval Bengali Literature which intelligent readers must never fail to peruse, if they want interest, information and inspiration. It is to a Vaishnava what the Holy Bible is to a Christian and the Gita to a Hindu.

The only shady feature of the book is its language which is here and there a queer combination of Sanskrit, Hindi and Bengali words. The poem abounds in many Sanskrit lines, many of which were composed by the poet and many, quoted from Sanskrit writers.

The exact date of Krishnadas's passing away has not been ascertained.

Some lines of *Chaitanya Charitamrita* :

“হরেনাম হরেনাম হরেনামৈব কেবলম্ ।  
 কলৌ নাস্ত্যাব নাস্ত্যাব গতিরনুশা ॥  
 এই আশ্রয় পাঞ নাম লই অনুক্ষণ ।  
 নাম লৈতে লৈতে মোর ভ্রাস্ত হৈল মন ।  
 ধৈর্য্য ধরিতে নারি হইলাম উন্মত্ত ।  
 হাসি কঁাদি নাচি গাই বৈছে মদোন্মত্ত ।  
 তবে ধৈর্য্য করি মনে করিল বিচার ।  
 কৃষ্ণ নামে জ্ঞানাচ্ছন্ন হইল আমার ॥  
 পাগল হইলাম আমি ধৈর্য্য মনে মনে ।  
 এত চিন্তি নিবেদিনু গুরুর চরণে ॥  
 কিবা মন্ত্র দিল গোসাঞি কিবা তার বল ।  
 জপিতে জপিতে মন্ত্র করিল পাগল ॥

হাসায় নাচায় মোরে করায় ক্রন্দন ।  
 এত শুনি গুরু হাসি বলিলা বচন ॥  
 কৃষ্ণনাম মহামন্ত্র এই ত স্বভাব ।  
 যেই জপে,—তার কৃষ্ণে উপজয়ে ভাব ॥  
 কৃষ্ণ বিষয়ক প্রেমা—পরম পুরুষার্থ ।  
 যার আগে তৃণ তুলা চারি পুরুষার্থ ॥ ”

**Jnanadas**—Born in 1530 of a Brahmin family at Kondra, an obscure village in the Birbhum District, Jnanadas composed many beautiful lyrics in the manner of **Chandidas**. Marked by simplicity, sincerity and sweetness, his songs of Radha and Krishna make a warm appeal to the heart and the ear. His unfolding of the delicate shades of emotions of his hero is specially beautiful. He has occasionally used the very lines and expressions of **Chandidas** (e.g. “স্বপ্নের লাগিয়া এ ঘর বাঁধিলু এ ঘর পুড়িয়া গেল”) while attempting to imitate him. That has not become a poet of his position. We quote below a couple of his sweet strains—“little dew-drops of celestial melody”—a parallel whereof it will be difficult to find in the finest English love-lyrics.

## নায়িকার অনুরাগ ।

কানু সে জীবন জাতি প্রাণ ওতুটী নয়ন তারা ।  
 পরাণ অধিক হিয়ার পুতলী নিমিখে নিমিখ হারা ॥  
 তোরা কুলবতী ভজ নিজপতি যার যেথা মনে লয় ।  
 ভাবিয়া দেখিনু শ্যাম বঁধু বিনে, আর কেহ মোর নয় ।  
 কি আর বুঝাও, কুলের ধরম, মন স্বতন্তুর নয় ।  
 কুলবতী হইয়া, রসের পরাণ, আর কার জানি হয় ॥  
 যে মোর করমে, লিখন আছিল. বিধি ঘটাতল মোরে  
 তোরা কুলবতী, দেখিনু যুক্তি, কুল লইয়া ঘরে ॥  
 গুরু ছরজন, বলে কুবচন, না যাব সে লোক পাড়া ।  
 জ্ঞানদাস কয়, কানুর পিরীতি, জাতি কুল শীল ছাড়া ॥

## মুরলী শিক্ষা ।

যে রঞ্জে, যে ধ্বনি উঠে জানহ বিশেষ ।  
 কোন্ রঞ্জে বাজে বাঁশী অতি অনুপাম ?  
 কোন্ রঞ্জে রাধা বলে ডাকে আমার নাম ?  
 কোন্ রঞ্জে বাজে বাঁশী সুললিত ধ্বনি ?  
 কোন্ রঞ্জে কেবা রবে নাচে ময়ূরিণী ?  
 কোন্ রঞ্জে রসালে ফুটায় পারিজাত ?  
 কোন্ রঞ্জে কদম ফুটায় প্রাণনাথ ?  
 কোন্ রঞ্জে, ষড় ঋতু হয় এক কালে ?



কোন্ রঞ্জে নিধু বন হয় ফুল দলে ?  
 কোন্ রঞ্জে কোকিল পঞ্চম স্বরে গায় ?  
 একে একে লিখাইয়া দেহ শ্যাম রায় ॥  
 জ্ঞানদাস শুনি কহে হাসি হাসি ।

“রাধে রাধে মোর” বোল বাজিবেক বাঁশী ॥

**Gobindadas**—Born in 1537 of a Vaidya family at Srikhanda, a hamlet in the Burdwan District, he took **Vidyapati** as his model and wrote many melodious songs in his manner about Radha and Krishna. These songs, though less emotional and less inspiring than those of his master, contain pictures of purer and more selfless love. The poet penned two Sanskrit lyrics also. We quote here one of his floweriest strains—

মরকত মঞ্জু মুকুর মুখমণ্ডল মুখরিত মুরলী স্তূতান ।  
 শুনি পশু পাখী, শাখিকুল পুলকিত, কালিন্দা বহয়ে উজান ।

কুঞ্জে সুন্দর শ্যামর চন্দ ।

কামিনী মনহি, মুরতিময় মনসিঙ্গ, জগজন নয়ন আনন্দ ॥

তনু অনুলেপন, ঘনসার চন্দন, মৃগমদ কুঙ্কুম পঙ্ক ।

অলিকুল-চুম্বিত, অবনরি বিলম্বিত, বনবনমাল বিটঙ্ক ॥

অতি কোমল, চরণতল শীতল, জীতল শরদরবিন্দ ।

কত কত ভকত, মধুপ আনন্দিত, বঞ্চিত দাস গোবিন্দ ॥

Gobinda died in 1612.

**Balaram Das**—Simple and sweet, his songs came out spontaneously from his heart and were not the outcome of any imitation. His life-story is shrouded in great obscurity. He came, in the opinion of some, of a Vaidya family at Srikhanda. He has been characterised as “কবিনৃপবংশজ” (a poet coming of a royal family) in *Pada Kalpa Taru*.

**Narottama Das**—He was born of a Kayastha family at Kheturi near Rajshahi, where a splendid fair, attended by a large number of Vaishnavas, is annually held. He wrote *Prema Bhakti Chandrika*, *Hatpattan*, *Ragamala* etc., which are favourite with the Vaishnava world. One of his sweetest strains runs as follows—

হরি হরি ! আর কি এমন দশা হব ।

এ ভব সংসার তাজি, পরম আনন্দে মজি, আর কবে ব্রজভূমে যাব ॥

সুখ হয় বৃন্দাবন, কবে হবে দরশন, সে ধূলি মাখিব কবে গায় ।

ভাবে গদ গদ হয়ে, রাধাকৃষ্ণ নাম লয়ে, কাঁদিয়া বেড়াব উভরায় ॥

নির্ভয়ে নিকুঞ্জে যায়, অষ্টাঙ্গ প্রণাম হয়ে,

ডাকিব হা রাধা নাম বলি ।

কবে যমুনার তীরে পরশ করিব নীরে, কবে পিব করপুটে তুলি ॥

আর কবে এমন হব, শ্রীরাস মণ্ডলে যাব, কবে গড়াগড়ি দিব তায় ।

সখীর অনুজ্ঞা হয়ে, কৃষ্ণসেবা লব চায়ে,

দৌহে ডাকিব সখী আয় ॥

কিবা গোবর্দ্ধন গিরি, দেখিব নয়ন ভরি, বাধাকুণ্ড করিব প্রণাম ।  
 ভ্রমিতে ভ্রমিতে কবে, এ দেহ পতন হবে,

এই আশা কবে নরোত্তম ॥

Though born with a silver spoon in his mouth, Narottama did not marry and led a most pious life. He had many disciples of whom Poet **Basanta Roy** and **Gangacharan Chakravarti**, were the most prominent.

Among other Vaishnava poets of the age, **Basanta Roy**, **Narahari Chakravarti**, **Narahari Sarkar**, **Ghanasyam**, **Jadunandan**, **Bansibadan**, **Vaishnava Das**, **Roy Sekhar**, **Pramananda Sen**, **Uddhab Das** and **Basu Ghosh** are the most prominent. Some lyrics of every one of them have found place in all anthologies of Vaishnava lyrics.

**ANTHOLOGIES**—The following are some of the best anthologies of the time—*Pala Samudra* by **Baba Aul Monohar Das**, *Padamrita Samudra* by **Radha Mohan Thakur**, *Padakalpa Latika* by **Gour Mohan Das** and *Pada Kalpa Tara* by **Vaishnava Das**. Of these anthologies again, the last is decidedly the best, judged from the judiciousness and representative character of the selections. It contains more than 3000 padas of more than 150 folk-poets.

MAHOMEDAN POETS—One comes across some sweet strains by eleven Mahomedan poets in those anthologies.

FEMALE POETS—**Rami, Madhabi Dasi** and **Rasamayee Dasi** figure as composers of several songs in those anthologies. Whether those songs were at all composed by female poets is doubted by some critics as it is not unlikely that male poets might compose them under the female nom-de-plume. Some songs of **Madhabi Dasi** (if she be their real author) are of a high quality.

Summary of the literary characteristics of the Vaishnava period—

(1) The poetry of the Vaishnava era was chiefly lyrical in tone and temper.

(2) It was marked by a warm religious fervour.

(3) The poetry of Love reached the high-water mark of perfection in this period. Love and nothing but Love, its concrete joys and sorrows, its yearnings and delusions, the raptures of union and the pangs of separation have nowhere been more beautifully delineated.

(4) Biography was first written in this era.

(5) As in the region of religion, so in the region of poetry, the spirit of democracy reigned supreme in this age. That greatly accounts for the springing up of a host of poets and singers from the rank and file of the Hindu community.

(6) Many Hindi words were used by the poets of this period.

“এই গীতি-কবিতাগুলি আমরা ইংলেণ্ডে ও আমেরিকার সাহিত্য-প্রদর্শনীতে লইয়া দেখাইতে পারি ;—আত্মগরিমার রাজ্যের অধিবাসীবৃন্দকে আত্মবিসর্জনের কথা শুনাইয়া মুগ্ধ করিতে পারি ।”

—ডাক্তার দীনেশ চন্দ্র সেন ।

“বিছাপতির রূপ-বিলাস, চণ্ডীদাসের প্রাণের যতীকতা, আব কৃষ্ণকমলের ‘স্বাদিতে নিজ মাধুরীতে’ যে বিরহ, এই তিনের অপূর্ব রসরসনো, কোন দেশের সাহিত্যেই আজ পর্য্যন্তও স্মৃষ্ট হয় নাই ।”

—দেশবন্ধু চিত্তবজ্র দাশ ।

### C. Works of Translation between the 15th and the 17th century.

1. **Krittibas's *Ramayana***—Born probably in the 15th century of a Brahmin family at Fulia, a beautiful hamlet in the Nadia District, Krittibas was the court-poet of **Raja Kansa Narayan**, a remote ancestor of the present Raja of Tahirpur (Rajshahi). He composed a free and popular translation of **Valmiki's *Ramayana*** which has exercised a far greater influence upon the life and thought of a whole people than the translations of Homer's and Dante's epics have done in European countries. Written in a most simple and most musical style, his *Ramayana* differs

“মুরারি-মুরলী-ধ্বনি-সদৃশ মুরারি  
মনোহর, কীর্তিবাস কীর্তিবাস কবি  
এ বঙ্গের অলঙ্কার।”—মধুসূদন

from **Valmiki's** on many important points and bears resemblance with portions of some Puranas and Upa-Puranas (*Kalika Purana*, *Adhyamta Ramayna*, *Adbhut Ramayana* and other Ramayanic cycles). Another remarkable point the

reader will notice. The pictures of heroism have been more beautifully painted in **Valmiki's** than in **Krittibas's** *Ramayana*, while the pictures of love and tenderness have been more finely depicted in **Krittibas's** than in **Valmiki's** *Ramayana*. This reflects no small credit on **Krittibas's** part. **Krittibas** lived in the Vaishnava era and no wonder he signally failed to preserve the virility and sublimity of the original in his own versions of some of the heroic episodes of the epic.

Of other translators of **Valmiki's** *Ramayana*, **Roghunandan Goswami**, is perhaps the best, though he is far less popular than **Krittibas** as a poet.

### Specimen of Krittibas's Poetry.

“অদ্বুত সীতার রূপ গুণ মনে মানি ।  
 এ সামান্য কথ্য নহে কমলা আপনি ॥  
 কথ্যরূপ জনক দেখেন দিনে দিনে ।  
 উমা কি কমলা বাণী ভ্রম হয় মনে ॥  
 হরিণী-নয়ন কিবা শোভিত কজ্জল ।  
 তিল ফুল জিনি তার নাসিকা উজ্জ্বল ।  
 সুললিত দুই বাহু দেখিতে সুন্দর ।  
 সুধাংশু জিনিয়া রূপ অতি মনোহর ॥

মৃষ্টিতে ধরিতে পারি সীতার কাঁকালি ।  
 হিঙ্গুলে মাখিত তার পায়ের অঙ্গুলি ॥  
 অরুণ বরণ তার চরণ কমল ।  
 তাহাতে নৃপের রাজ্যে শূন্যিতে কোমল ॥  
 রাজহংস ভ্রম হই দেখিলে গমন ।  
 অত্যন্ত জিনিষ তার মধুর বচন ।  
 দশদিক আলো করে জানকীর রূপে ।  
 লাবণ্য নিঃসার কত প্রতি লোমকূপে ॥”

2. **Kasiram Das's, *Mahabharata***—**Kasiram Das** was born in the 17th century of a Kayastha family at Shingi, a small village in the Burdwan District. He immortalised himself by translating Vyas's *Mahabharata* just as **Krittibas**

“ভারত বসের স্রোতঃ আনিয়াছ তুমি  
 জুড়াতে গৌড়ের তৃণ সে বিমল জলে  
 নারিবে শোধিতে ধার কভু বঙ্গভূমি ।”—মধুসূদন

immortalised himself by translating **Valmiki's *Ramayana***. Like **Krittibas**, he departed from the original on many important points, but unlike him he succeeded better in the delineation of the



pictures of heroism than in the handling of the human emotions. His diction is more learned than that of Krittibas, but not so learned as to be incomprehensible to the common run of people. Even the most uncultivated country-folk can appreciate and enjoy his poetry.

*The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* have found a way into every Hindu home and are daily read by millions. Even if all other Bengali books be destroyed and these two remain, there is no cause for suspense as to the future of the Bengalis as a race.

Previous to Kashiram, many minor poets had translated portions of Vyas's *Mahabharata*. These translations are not very beautiful, though it is quite probable that some of them furnished Kashiram with valuable materials for his masterpiece.

### Specimen of His Verse.

“দেখ দ্বিজ, মনসিজ, জিনিয়া মূর্তি ।  
 পদ্মপত্র, যুগ্মনেত্র, পরশয়ে শ্রুতি ॥  
 অনুপম, তনু শ্যাম, নীলোৎপল আভা ।  
 মুখরুচি, কত শুচি, করিয়াছে শোভা ॥

সিংহগ্রীব, বন্ধুজীব, অধর রাতুল ।  
 খগরাজ, পায় লাজ, নাসিকা অতুল ॥  
 দেখ চারু, যুগ্মভুরু, ললাট প্রসর ।  
 গজস্কন্ধ, গতিমন্দ, মত্ত করিবর ॥  
 ভুজযুগে, নিন্দে নাগে, আজন্মলম্বিত ।  
 করিকর, যুগ্মবর, জানু সুবলিত ॥  
 বুক পাটা, দন্ত ছটা, জিনিয়া দামিনী ।  
 দেখি ইহা, ধৈর্য্য-হিয়া, নহেক কামিনী ॥  
 মহাবীৰ্য্য, যেন সূর্য্য, ঢাকিয়াছে মেঘে ।  
 অগ্নি অংশু, যেন পাংশু, আচ্ছাদিত লাগে ॥

3. Of other works of translation between the 15th and the 17th century, **Krishnadas Babaji's** *Bhaktamal* (rendered from Hindi into Bengali verse) and **Kabi Chandra's** translation of the *Bhagabat* are perhaps the most note-worthy. *Bhaktamal* at least containing fine life-sketches of many great saints is very favourite with the Vaishnava world.

D. The Age of Kabikankan (from the 17th to the middle of the 18th century.)

Towards the fag end of the Vaishnava period, a new note was struck in the realm of Bengali poetry. Hitherto the divine love between

Radha and Krishna and the character-sketch of Sri Gouranga absorbed the attention of the Bengali poets. Almost all the gods and goddesses of the Hindu Pantheon were either forgotten or thrown into the shade. But with the gradual decadence of the Chaitanya-cult in the 16th century, the order of things underwent a considerable change and such mythological and folk gods and goddess as Siva, Chandi, Padma etc., became themes of Bengali poetry.

One Madhabacharya of Tribeni in the Hugli District first wrote a poem on the goddess Chandi. This poem was probably written in 1579 A. D. As an artistic piece, it is far from notable. It appeals but little to the ear and emotions. Nevertheless, it has a moment all its own. It formed later on the nucleus of one of the most magnificent poems in Bengali Literature. That poem is *Chandi Kavya* written either towards the close of the 16th or in the beginning of the 17th century. Its author Mukundaram Chakravarti, was born probably in the middle of the 16th century at Damunya, a beautiful hamlet in the Burdwan District. His ancestors had lived there for six or seven generations, but he had to

take to his heels from that place, being highly oppressed by Mahumed Sharif, the-then Collector of the Burdwan District, and seek shelter at Anraba in the Midnapur District. Here the poet was appointed private tutor to the sons of **Raja Bankra Dev** and here he penned his celebrated **Chandi Kavya**, which brought him the distinction "**KABIKANKAN**" (The Bangle of a poet) as a mark of the Raja's appreciation of his splendid poetic powers.

The poem is divided into two parts, the first part containing the story of Kalaketu and Fullara, and the second that of Dhanapati and Khullana. The *motif* in both the parts is the same—to depict how the worship of the folk-goddess Chandi came into vogue in the country. But the beauty of the poem does not consist in its Chandi-episode—rather this episode is a limitation of the poem. To make the goddess Chandi greatly anxious to have her worship celebrated by the infidels by showing favours and frowns is to depict her like a petty mortal potentate, bent on having his hallelujah sung by his people by any means, fair or foul. But the blame may or may not lie with the poet. He might have simply

paid a tribute of respect to a long-standing folk-tradition or followed his predecessor **Madhabacharya**.

Be that as it may, the real beauty of the poem consists in a series of fine life-like hearth-side pictures of the Arcadian world depicted in the two stories with dramatic skill and vigour. Kalaketu the fowler, his devoted wife—flowery Fullara, Murarisil the hypocrite, Bhanrudatta the villaneous rogue, Dhanapati the merchant, his co-wives, angelic Khullana and envious Lahana, their wicked maid-servant Durbala, Srimanta the school-master have been delineated with unfailing fidelity to truth. The poet has painted the Hindu household in as graphic, life-like a way as possible and thrown a flood of light upon the quaint manners and customs, current among our remote fore-fathers. A realistic novelist of our times—Bankim or Rabindranath—has far from excelled Kabikankan in the art of portraying faithful household pictures.

Kabikankan's keen penetration into the inmost recesses of the human heart, his great skill in describing the sights and sounds of Nature, his remarkable power of evoking pity and tenderness

are amply manifest in *Chandi Kavya*. Just note the character-delineations of Bhanrudatta and Durbala if not of any one else and you will at once get a glimpse into the poet's vast knowledge of the human heart. Read the description of the tornado at Kalinga or the description of Kalidaha

‘কমলে কামিনী আমি হেরিনু স্বপনে  
কালিদহে ! বসি বামা শতদল-দলে  
(নিশীথে চন্দ্রিমা যথা সরসীর জলে  
মনোহরা) বাম-করে সাপটী হেলনে  
গজেশে, গ্রাসিছে তারে উগরি সঘনে ।  
গুঞ্জরিছে অলিপুঞ্জ অন্ধ পরিমলে ;  
বহিছে দহের বারি মৃদু কলকলে ।  
কার না ভোলেরে মন এ হেন ছলনে ?  
কবিতা-পঙ্কজ-রবি, শ্রীকবিকঙ্কণ ।  
ধন্য তুমি বঙ্গভূমে ! যশঃ সুধা দানে  
অমর করিলা তোমা অমরকারিণী  
বাগদেবী ভোগিলা দুখ জীবনে, ব্রাহ্মণ ।  
এবে কে পৃজিবে তোমা, মজি তব গানে ?—  
বন্দ-হৃদ-হৃদে চণ্ডী কমলে কামিনী ।”—মধুসূদন

when the goddess manifested herself there and you will notice how beautifully he can depict Nature. Read the Baramashya of Fullara and you will feel how the poet can touch the tenderest chords of the heart.

*Chandi Kavya* throws some interesting side-light upon the maritime activities of the old Bengali people who went to "Sweet Ceylon," Sumatra and "other flowering isles" for mercantile purposes.

Kabikankan has been very aptly compared with "Dan Chaucer" by our distinguished countryman, R. C. Dutt and Mr. E. B. Cowell, an ardent admirer of Bengali Literature. Both had a very fine ear for the music of verse and both highly excelled in the art of story-telling. We reproduce below a well-known passage from *Chandi-Kavya* :

‘অপরূপ দেখ আর, ওরে ভাই কর্ণধার

কমলে কামিনী অবতার ।

বরি রামা বাম করে, উগারয়ে করিবরে,

পুনরপি কবয়ে সংহার ।

কমল কনকরুচি, স্বাহা স্বধা কিবা শচী,

মদনমঞ্জুরী কলাবতী ।

সরস্বতী কি বা উমা, চিত্রলেখা তিলোত্তমা,

সত্যভামা রম্ভা অরুন্ধতী ॥

উরুযুগ সুন্দর, নাভি গভীর সর,

বাহুযুগ মৃণাল সঙ্কাশ ।

বিমল আগ্রের আভা, নানা অলঙ্কার শোভা,

অলঙ্কার করয়ে বিনাশ ॥

হেমময় হার ছলে, কি শোভা তাহার গলে,

স্থির হয়। সৌদামিনী বৈসে ।

নিরুপম পরকাশ, মন্দ মধুর হাস,

আইসে ভঙ্গী শিখিবার আশে ॥

কলাপি-কলাপ-কেশ, ভুবন মোহন বেশ,

পারে শোভে সোণার নূপুর ।

প্রভাতে ভানুর ছটা, কপালে সিন্দুর ফোটা,

রবির কিরণ করে দূর ॥

বাজহাস রব জিনি, চরণে নূপুর ধ্বনি,

দশ নখে দশ চাঁদ ভাসে ।

কোকনদ-দর্প-হর, বেষ্টিত যাবক কর,

অঙ্গুলি চম্পক পবকাশে ।

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ছুই করে শোভে শঙ্খ, ভুবনে উপমা রক্ষ,

গলায় ছুলিছে হেমহার ।



সুবর্ণ কুণ্ডল দোলে, কপালে বিজুরী খেলে,  
তনুরুচি খণ্ডে অন্ধকার ॥”

Shortly after Kabikankan, several minor poets arose—**Rameswar Bbattacharya**, author of *Sivayana\** and *Satyapirer Katha*, **Ketak Das** and **Kshemananda**, joint authors of *Manasar Bhasan*† and **Ghanaram Chakravarti**, author of *Dharma Mangal*. Of them, Rameswar and Ghanaram are scarcely read to-day and Ketak Das and Kshemnanda delight only the village-folk when during the Puja festivities, their songs are sung all over the countryside. The central theme of *Manasar Bhasan* is the introduction of the worship of the folk-goddess Manasa and its chief charm hangs round the figure of Behula whose wifely devotion touches even the most adamant heart.

Summary of the literary characteristics of the age of Kabikankan :

\* A minor play of Girish Chandra Ghose—Hara Gouri—is partially based on this poem.

† Previous and subsequent to Ketak Das and Kshemananda *Manasar Bhasan* was written by many minor poets, none of whom attained to any considerable measure of success.

(1) Story-telling in verse came into vogue in this age.

(2) Poetry, which was akin to music with the Vaishnava poets, almost degenerated into prose in the hands of almost all the poets of this age save Kabikankan.

(3) Many Persian and Urdu words were used by the poets of this period. That was obviously due to the long intimacy between the Hindus and Mahomedans.

**E. The Age of Krishnachandra** (from the middle of the 18th to the middle of the 19th century).

**Krishna Chandra Roy**, a forefather of the present Maharaja of Nadia, was the Raja of Navadwip during the second and third quarters of the 18th century. Born in 1710, he was a shrewd politician, an able ruler, a patron of learning and a lover of amusements (not usually of the refined type). He was one of the principal actors in the drama of Plassey. Bengali poetry received a great impetus at his hands. He died in 1782.

Two great poets—both adherents of the Shakta cult\*—flourished in Bengal in Krishna-chandra's time—**Bharat Chandra Roy** and **Ramprasad Sen**.

Born probably in 1712 of a Brahmin family at Basantapur in the Hugli District, **Bharat Chandra** acquired, in due course, a thorough mastery over Sanskrit and Persian and was appointed court-poet of Maharaj Krishna Chandra in recognition of his high poetic powers displayed in some early performances. Besides *Vidya Sundar* and *Annada Mangal*, the two keystones of Bharat Chandra's genius, the poet wrote many Bengali and Hindi lyrics and rendered Bilhan's *Chaura Panchasika* into Bengali verse-forms. Gay and frivolous, cultured and cynical, witty and perverse, he embodied in his works all the outer elegance and all the inner corruption of a decadent aristocratic society.

*Vidya Sundar* is a poetical romance, detailing the love-adventures of a King's daughter. Vararuchi of the Kalidasian era was the first poet to handle the Vidya Sundar episode. Krishnaram

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\* An ancient Indian cult typifying the destructive principle in Nature—"Nature red in tooth and claw."

of Nimta and Poet Ramprasad of Bharatchandra's time next treated the theme. Bharatchandra derived the ground-work of his plot from these poets (specially the latter) and made a distinct improvement thereon in handling the subject. His work, though retaining many of the faults of his predecessors, excels theirs in form, finish and artistic skill. Attempts have been made herein to blacken the fame of the Raj family of Burdwan.

The magic of Bharatchandra's verse consists in its sweet melody. His characterisations of Vidya and Sunder and Siva and Annapurna in two principal works are occasionally marked by a vulgarity which is really repulsive and there is occasionally in his works an excess of metaphors to which a student of Bengali poetry may take a reasonable exception. The amatory episode between Vidya and Sundar smacks of rank Byronism\*—of 'nude Venus Pandemos', if the

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\* Certain portions of the poem like "বিহারারস্ত"; "বিহার" "বিপরীত-বিহারারস্ত", "বিপরীতবিহার", "দিবাবিহার ও মানভঙ্গ", are too obscene to be read by persons of refined taste. They have no vital connection with other parts of the poem. It is the duty of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad to see that they are not published in any future edition of the poem.

expression be permitted—and the poet's pen-picture of Siva reminds one of a petty trickish juggler. Nevertheless, Bharat Chandra is a great poet—he has imparted a smoothness and elegance to our

\* \* \*      রস-বিহ্বলিত  
ভারত অমৃতভাষী  
জনমি স্তম্ভে      বাঁশীতে উন্নত  
করেছে গউড় বাসী ।”—হেমচন্দ্র

tongue which it has always retained. Just mark the word-picture of Hira Malini in *Vidya Sundar* or the description of Annada's crossing the Ganges in *Ananda Mangal* and you will at once be struck by the delicacy and beauty of his verse-music.

### Description of Hira Malini.

সূর্য যায় অস্তাচলে আইসে যামিনী ।  
হেন কালে তথা এক আইল কামিনী ॥  
কথায় হীরার ধার, হীরা তার নাম ।  
দাঁত ছোলা, মাজা দোলা, হাস্য অবিরাম ॥

গালভরা গুয়াপান. পাকি মালা গলে ।  
 কানে কড়ি, কড়েরাঁড়ি, কথা কয় ছলে ॥  
 চূড়া বাঁধা চুল, পরিধান সাদা সাড়ী ।  
 ফুলের চুপড়ি কাঁখে, ফিরে বাড়ী বাড়ী ॥  
 আছিল বিস্তর ঠাট, প্রথম বয়সে ।  
 এবে বুড়া, তবু কিছু গুড়া, আছে শেষে ॥  
 ছিটা ফোঁটা মন্ত্র তন্ত্র জানে কতগুলি ।  
 চেঙ্গড়া ভুলায়ে খায়, জানে কত ঠুলি ॥  
 বাতাসে পাতিয়া ফাঁদ কোন্দল ভেজায় ।  
 পড়সী না থাকে কাছে কোন্দলের দায় ॥  
 মন্দ মন্দ গতি, ঘন ঘন হাত নাড়া ।  
 তুলিতে বৈকালে ফুল আইল সেই পাড়া ॥

The wording is as exquisite as the brush-power! Bharat Chandra has accomplished with his pen what a master-painter might achieve with the hair-pecil. His *Chaura Panchasika* is a fine piece of metrical translation and his lyrics have a lilt, 'go' and touch which is a rare thing in the old Bengali poetry.

Some lines of Bharatchandra have passed into household expressions :

“নীচ যদি উচ্চ ভাষে, হুবুদ্বি উড়ায় হেসে”

“মন্ত্রের সাধন কিম্বা শরীর পতন”

“ডের পিরিতি বালির বাঁধ ।  
ক্ষণে হাতে দড়ি ক্ষণেক চাঁদ ॥”

Traces of the Mahomedan influence upon him are distinctly discernible in his ideas and vocabulary.

Maharaj Krishna Chandra conferred upon him the title ‘Kabi Gunakar.’ He expired in 1760.

His reputation is under a cloud now owing to the aversion of the modern educated mind for the subtle and persistent odour of decaying morals and dying faith pervading his greatest work.

**Ramprasad Sen** was born of a Vaidya family at Kumarhati near Halisaher in 24 Perganas in the first quarter of the 18th century. He was a genuine devotee and was patronised by Maharaj Krishna Chandra for his beautiful poetical gifts. His descendants are still alive. It is said that while serving as a clerk in a Zemindari estate, he filled his office-books with songs about the goddess Kali, which attracted the notice of the Zeminder when supervising the office-work and filled him with high admiration so much so that he granted him a pension of Rs. 30 per month and asked him to write more and more of such songs. He

wrote three long poems—*Vidya Sundar*, *Kali Kirtan* and *Krishna Kirtan*—but his reputation as a poet does not rest thereon. There are no doubt occasional touches of fine poetry in them—in songs like “গিরিবর আর আমি পারি নাহে প্রবোধ দিতে উমারে”—but these can hardly undo the unpleasant effects produced by the preponderance of Sanskrit words and the excess of metaphors therein.

Ramprashad's fame as a poet rests on his

“চণ্ডীদাসের—রামপ্রসাদের  
কণ্ঠ কোথায় বাজেরে?”

songs about the goddess Kali\*, many of which have passed into household expressions in Bengal. Ramprasad has humanised the age-old conception of the goddess with her eternal cosmic war-dance and sung of her loving kindness in simple and deep tones. Though a Shakta, his songs are pervaded out and out by a warm Vaishnava spirit.

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\* A female form of the Deity (personifying Kala or the all-destroying Time). “Thou ‘Time’ the All-Destroyer!” (Vivekananda).



Marked by a warm religious ecstasy, a deep philosophical tone and a sweet simplicity of expression, these notes when trilled with "full-throated ease" inspire both the singer and the listener with feelings of deep reverence and joy and transport them for the time being into

"Regions mild of calm and serene air  
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot  
which men call Earth."

There are people who wish to hear a song of Ramprashad ere they depart for the country from whose bourne no traveller returns.

Below is given a free translation of one of his songs.\*—Will such a day ever come when tears will trickle down the pupil of the eye as I shall cry 'Tara' 'Tara'; when the lotus of the heart will burst into blossom, the darkness of the mind disappear and I shall roll on the earth crying always on the name of Tara; when all distinctions and all pangs of the heart will be things of the past; Oh, the formless Tara, who is more than a hundred Vedas, will be my lot;

এমন দিন কি হবে তারা ?

বয়ে 'তারা' 'তারা' 'তারা' বলে

তারা বয়ে পড়বে ধরা !"

Sri Ramprasad proclaims: The Mother is present in every vessel. Look, blind eyes, at the Mother, the Night-dispeller who dwells in night.

The similes employed by Ramprasad are very commonplace and as such, very effective. The ethical value of his songs is not small. They enjoin strict self-discipline as the way to salvation. They have gone to the heart of the people and are enjoyed by the peasants and the pandits alike.

Sister Nivedita compared Ramprasad with **Blake** Maharaj Krishna Chandra honoured Ramprasad with the distinction 'Kabiranjana' ('Entertainer of Poets').

Ramprasad died in 1775.

After Ramprasad, **Durgadas Mukerji** wrote *Durga Bhakti Tarangini*, a poem of some merit and **Ram Basu** (1786—1828), **Kamala Kanta** (1800—?), **Ram Dulal** (1785—1851), **Raghu Nath** (1750—1836), **Antony Firingi**, **Raja Ram Krishna**, **Dasarathi Roy\*** (1804—1857) and a

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\* His Panchali or books of songs narrating many episodes of *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata* and the Puranas have a wide currency in Bengal. Some of these songs are very sweet and make a fine appeal to the heart, but the majority have the air of vulgarity about them.

host of other singers sang songs about the goddess Kali. Of these singers, Kamalakanta is the best, occasionally approaching Ramprasad as regards the divine beauty of his songs. One of his melodious songs runs as follows—

“মজ্জলো আমার মন ভ্রমরা শ্যামাপদ নীলকমলে !

( শ্যামাপদ নীলকমলে, কালীপদ নীলকমলে )

বিষয় মধু তুচ্ছ হোলো কামাদি কুসুম সকলে ॥

চরণ কালো ভ্রমর কালোয় মিলে গেল ।

পঞ্চ তত্ত্ব প্রধান মন্ত, রঙ্গ দেখে ভঙ্গ দিলে ॥

কমলাকান্তের মনে,

আশাপূর্ণ এতদিনে,

সুখ দুখ সমান হোলো আনন্দ সাগর উপলে ॥

About this time, many fine erotic songs were written by **Ramnidhi Roy** (1741—1834) and attempts were made by a band of singers to revive Vaishṇava lyrics again. **Ram Basu**, **Haru Thakur** (1738—1813), **Rashu** and **Nrisinha**, **Nityananda Das Vairagi**, **Jajneswari**, **Bhola Maira**, **Ramrup Thakur**, **Krishna Kamal Goswami** (1810—1888) and many other singers sprang up about this time and sang songs about Radha and Krishna. Of these singers, **Krishnakamal** is beyond doubt the most remarkable. One of his songs is reproduced here.—

“শুন ব্রহ্মরাজ                      স্বপনেতে আজ  
       দেখা দিয়ে গোপাল কোথায় লুকালে !  
 যেন সে চঞ্চল চাঁদে                      অঞ্চল ধরি কাঁদে  
       জননী ‘দে ননী’ ‘দে ননী’ বলে ॥  
       যত কাঁদে বাছা বলি সর সর  
       আমি অভাগিনী বলি সর সর  
 ( বল্লম ) নাহি অবসর,              কেবা দিবে সর  
       অমনি সর্ সর্ বলি ফেলিলাম ঠেলে ।  
       যে চাঁদ নিছনি কত কোটি চাঁদ  
       সে কেন কাঁদিবে বলি চাঁদ চাঁদ  
 ( বল্লম ) চাঁদের মাঝে তুই              অকলঙ্ক চাঁদ  
       ঐ দেখ চাঁদ পড়ে তোর চরণ তলে ॥”

We shall notice his works more fully when dilating on the indigenous plays of Bengal.

A revised summary of the literary characteristics of the age of Krishna Chandra :

(1) It was more an age of songs and lyrics than one of story-telling.

(2) The poetry of this period bears marks of conflicts between the Vaishnavas and the Shaktas. Even a poet like Ramprasad did not hesitate to fling abuses on the Vaishnavas.

(3) Touches of obscenity vitiate the writings of the greatest poet of the age.

(4) An inordinate love of metaphors in two principal poets of the period strikes even the most casual reader of their poems.

(5) Many fresh Mahomedan words and ideas were imported into the writings of the mouth-piece of the age.

(6) An attempt was made to revive the Vaishnava lyrics.

## F. The Modern Period

( from the middle of the 19th century up to the present day. )

The British period in Indian history commenced from the year 1761, but it was not till the first quarter of the 19th century that western education began to make headway among the people of Bengal. It was about this time that the great educationist **David Hare** with the help of the great religious reformer **Raja Ram Mohan Roy** started the Hindu College at Calcutta to teach English Literature and Western science to Hindu boys and it was also about this time that three

noble-hearted missionaries **Carey, Marshman** and **ward** set up a college and a printing press at Serampur and issued a vernacular journal—*Samachar Darpan*. A new era in Bengali Literature dawned at this time and all-round epoch-making changes were effected in our life and letters by the fusion of the Eastern and Western culture. A splendid prose literature with different branches owed its inception during the middle of the 19th century, and the composition of dramas, epics and lyrics upon the basis of an intelligent assimilation of the best ideals of the Orient and the Occident commenced from this time.

1. The first Bengali poet that sprang up in the beginning of the 19th century was **Iswar Chandra Gupta**, 'a sort of Indian Rebelais'. Born of a Vaidya family at Kanchrapara in 24-Perganas in 1811, he wrote poems on a wide variety of

<p>‘বুদ্ধি কর মাতৃভাষা,      পূরাও মনের আশা দেশে কর বিদ্যাবিতরণ।’</p>
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subjects—moral, spiritual and social themes, Love, Nature, fight between the English and the Sikhs and was regarded for some time as “a

grand Napoleon in the realm of rhyme." Most of these performances save a few epigrams (like 'বিড়ালক্ষী বিধুমুখী মুখে গন্ধ ছুটে', 'বেকন পড়িয়া করে বেদের সিদ্ধান্ত', 'অনেক কষাই ভাল গোসায়ের চেয়ে'...) are scarcely read to-day, and if despite this disparaging fact, Iswar Chandra looms as a considerable literary figure before us, it is because of his connection with Bankim Chandra and Dinabandhu and of his splendid journalistic venture—*Sambad Pravarak*—at the early stage of Bengali prose literature. His prose-writings (specially, biographies of the old Bengali poets) are decidedly more beautiful than his metrical effusions.

The poet died in 1858.

2. **Rangalal Banerji** was a poet of far higher order than **Iswar Chandra Gupta**. Born in 1826 of a Brahmin family at Bakulia in the Hugli District, he was educated at the Hugli College and acquired mastery over many Indian dialects and three or four European languages. He wrote three poems—*Padmini*, *Karma Debi* and *Sura Sundari*—on the splendid heroism and self-sacrifice of the Mediaeval Rajputs and of these, *Padmini* is the most inspiring, being written in a fiery style from beginning to end. Rangalal's





note-worthy though minor poets of the period. *Sadral Satak* contains a century of fine didactic poems (some of which are translations from the poems of Hafej) and *Nirtasita Sita* abounds in many touching lines.

The following is the English rendering of some well-known epigrammatic lines of Krishna Chandra :

“Can a man who is ever happy be ever alive even by mistake to the sufferings of the distressed? How will he, who has never been bitten by the snake, feel how much pain is caused by poison?\*

“Seeing pricks, why do you desist from phlucking the lotus? Can happiness be attained on earth without suffering? ”†

Mention is also due to some select poems of **Jadugopal Chattopadhyaya**—*Nitra*, *Janmashumi*—which have the ring of real poesy about them.

4. We next pass on the Honied Voice of the Bengali Muse”‡—“the mighty-mouthed inventor

\* “চিরসুখী জন, ভ্রমে কি কখন, ব্যথিত বেদন বুঝিতে পারে ?

কি বেদনা বিষে, বুঝিবে সে কিসে, কভু অশিষিষে দংশেনি যারে ? ”

+ কাঁটা হেরি ক্লান্ত কেন কমল তুলিতে ?

দ্রুত বিনা সুখ লাভ হয় কি মহীতে ?

‡ “নামে মধু, হৃদে মধু, বাক্যে মধু যার

এ হেন মধুরে ভুলে সাধ্য আছে কার ? ”

of harmonies," "the God-gifted organ-voice of Bengal." Born in 1824 of a respectable Kayastha family of Sagardari in the District of Jessore, **Madhusudan Dutt** passed the Junior Scholarship Examination from the Hindu College, then "the nurse of all great wist-" in 1842 and under the influence of Richardson and **De Rozio**, became a Christian in the year following. He prosecuted further studies at the Bishop's College till 1847, when he went to Madras in the role of a sub-editor of a journal. Here he acquired mastery over several European and Indian languages and published two English poems, *The Captive Lady* and *Visions of the Past* recounting the story of Sanjukta and Prithwiraj in the one and dwelling on the love of Radha and Krishna in the other. These juvenile excursions in the Parnassus called forth high admiration both in India and the United Kingdom. A critic in *The Athenaeum* went so far as to remark that *The Captive Lady* contained passages which "neither Scott nor Byron would have been ashamed to own." After eight years' stay in Madras, Madhusudan came back to Calcutta and made a name by translating the play *Ratnabali* into English with singular ability

and elegance in 1858, when the-then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal and other distinguished Europeans were expected to see the play represented on the Belgachia Stage. He now perceived how poor was Bengali Literature in dramas and produced two plays in Bengali—*Sarmistha* and *Padmabati*—which were successfully staged. After this, under the kind patronage of **Maharaja Sir Jatindramohan Tagore**, he produced two epics in blank verse—*Tilottama Samthab Kavya* and *Meghnad Badh Kavya*—of which the latter is worthy of being placed by the magnificent

“—তুমিও আইস, দেবি, তুমি মধুকরী  
কল্লনা ! কবির চিত্ত-ফুলবন-মধু  
লয়ে, রচ, মধুচক্রে, গৌড়জন বাহে  
আনন্দে করিবে পান সুধা নিরবধি ।”—মধুসূদন

epics of Homer, Dante and Milton in point of sublime music, luxuriant similes and grandeur of inner conception.

*Meghnad Badh* appeared with a **highly** appreciative fore-word by “a real B. A.”—Poet **Hem Chandra Banerji**. It was at first very coolly

received by a section of orthodox pandits who did not relish any innovation in diction at all. An anonymous writer \* went so far as to write a parody of it ('ভুচ্ছন্দবোধ কাব্য') in *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, then a vernacular journal. But as time rolled on, the croakings of these critics were silenced and the poem became universally popular. Rabindra nath was not a great admirer of the poem in his juvenile days, but his opinion has now undergone a radical change (Vide his *Reminiscences*).

### Story of Meghnad Badh Kavya :

Ravana, King of Lanka (Ceylon), steals Sita, wife of Rama, from the Dandaka forest in Southern India. Ram and Lakshmana with their troops build a bridge over the sea and cross over to Lanka where a titanic struggle ensues. The sons and brothers of Ravana one after another lead the fight and die. *Meghnad Badh Kavya* depicts the fall of Meghnad, the most powerful of Ravana's sons, in their struggle. As a warrior, Meghnad is superior to Rama and his brother. He

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\* Jagadbandhu Bhadra.

repulsed them before in warfare. If he can go out to the battle after propitiating the God of Fire in the temple of Nikumbhila, he becomes by virtue of a boon of that God, quite invincible. He defeated even the god of thunder in a battle. But his superior heroism does not avail him much at this moment. As a consequence of his espousing an unholy cause, the gods go against him and send the goddess Maya\* in the aid of Lakshmana who brings about his fall in the temple of Nikumbhila before he can become invincible by propitiating the Fire-God.

“Love virtue ; she alone is free  
 She can teach ye how to climb  
 Higher than the sphery chime ;  
 Or, if virtue feeble were  
 Heaven itself would stoop to her.” (Milton.)

That is the kenote of the epic and the poet has evinced magnificent skill in the character-sketches of the *dramatis personae* and word-pictures of Heaven, Hell, the city of Lanka, the ocean, the forest of Dandanka etc. Pramila, the heroine of the epic, with her tender and heroic

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\* “A celestial maiden personifying the active will of the creator of the Universe.”

qualities is a distinct creation of Madhusudan. The description of her self-immolation on the funeral pyre of her husband is extremely touching. Many passages of *Meghnad Badh* are in the lips of every cultured Bengali. Here is one such passage—the poet pays homage herein to the Father of Sanskrit Poetry :

“নমি আমি, কবিগুরু, তব পদাম্বুজে,  
 বাঙ্গীকি ! হে ভারতের শিরশ্চূড়ামণি,  
 তব অনুগামী দাস, রাজেন্দ্র-সঙ্গমে  
 দীন যথা যায় দূর-তীর্থ-দরশনে ।  
 তব পদচিহ্ন ধ্যান করি দিবানিশি  
 পশিয়াছে কত যাত্রী যশের মন্দিরে,  
 দমনিয়া ভবদম ছরন্ত শমনে—  
 অমর ! শ্রীভর্তৃহরি, সূরী ভবভূতি  
 শ্রীকণ্ঠ ; ভারতে খ্যাত বরপুত্র যিনি  
 ভারতীর, কাণ্দিদাস—সুমধুর-ভাষী ;  
 মুরারি-মুরলী-ধ্বনি-সদৃশ মুরারী  
 মনোহর, কীৰ্ত্তিবাস কীৰ্ত্তিবাস কবি,  
 এ বঙ্গের অলঙ্কার !—হে পিতঃ কেমনে,  
 কবিতা-রসের সার রাজহংস-কুলে  
 মিলি করি কেলি আমি, না শিখালে তুমি ?

গাঁথিব নূতন মালা, তুলি সযতনে  
 তব কাব্যোদ্যানে ফুল ; ইচ্ছা সাজাইতে  
 বিবিধ ভূষণে ভাষা ; কিন্তু কোথা পাব  
 ( দীন আমি ) রত্নরাজী, তুমি নাহি দিলে  
 রত্নাকর ? কৃপা, প্রভু, কর আকিঞ্চনে ।”

The central plot of the epic is taken from strictly Oriental sources—from Valmiki and Krittibas (specially the latter), but its ideas, imagery and outer design are occasionally adapted from Occidental poets like Homer, Virgil, Dante, Tasso and Milton. In the words of Dr. B. N. Seal, it is “a splendid Parian monument of transparent classic art built on oriental foundations, a stately Pantheon on the site of a Pagoda,” No other work in Bengali Literature is so redolent of the wealth and aroma of different pasture-lands of poetry—of “the scholar’s flavour of literary reminiscence” as Pattison puts it. The study of *Meghnad Badh* like that of *Paradise Lost* is “the last reward of consummated scholarship.”

*Meghnad Badh* was closely followed by two farces, which had the saving merit of being free from any taint of vulgarity. *Birangana* or a volume of fine “Heroic Epistles” in the manner of

Ovid, *Brajangana*, a volume of charming lyrics describing the heart-pangs of Radha when separated from Krishna and *Krishnakumari* a powerful tragedy delineating the sad lot of an unhappy Rajput princess, were written shortly after. *Krishnakumari* was played with great scenic pomp and eclat at the early stage of the Bengali theatre.

Madhusudan set out for England in 1862 to study for the bar, and after five years' sojourn in Europe, came back to Calcutta as a barrister. While in Europe, he wrote for the first time in our language, a volume of *Sonnets* on a variety of themes—Hindu festivities, mythological characters, ancient classical, Bengali and Continental poets, natural phenomena, friends...—which de-

বঙ্গভাষা ।

হে বঙ্গ ! ভাণ্ডারে তব বিবিধ রতন,  
তা সবে, (অবোধ আমি) অবহেলা করি,  
পরধন-লোভে মত্ত, করিছু ভ্রমণ  
পরদেশে, ভিক্ষারুত্তি কৃষ্ণে আচরি ।  
কাটাইলু বহুদিন সুখ পরিহরি  
অনিদ্রায়, অনাহারে সপি কায়মন,  
মজিনু বিফল-তপে অবরেণ্যে বরি -



স্বপ্নে তব কুললক্ষ্মী ক'য়ে দিলা পরে,—  
 “ওরে বাছা ! মাতৃকোষে রতনের রাজি,  
 এ ভিখারী দশা তবে, কেন তোর আজি  
 যা ফিরি, অজ্ঞান তুই, যারে ফিরি ঘরে ! ”  
 পালিলাম আজ্ঞা স্থখে ; পাইলাম কালে  
 মাতৃ-ভাষা-রূপে খনি, পূর্ণ মণিজালে ॥

serve to be placed by the best sonnets of Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth by virtue of their intrinsic excellence. One of his sonnets—  
 “আমরা”—is an eloquent expression of feelings for the loss of freedom of his homeland. Madhusudan could not rise to eminence in the legal profession and died a most miserable death in a charitable hospital—a fact for which every Bengali ought to hang down his head in shame. Before

“কৃতঘ্ন মা বঙ্গভূমি !      এত দিন তব  
    কবিত্ব-কানন  
 যেই পিকবর-কল,      উছলে যমুনা জল,  
 উছলিত ব্রজে শ্যাম বাঁশরী যেমন ;—  
 সে মধুস্বারে আজি      পাষণ পরাণে  
    ( কি বলিব হায় ! )

অযতনে অনাদরে      বঙ্গ কবিকুলেশ্বরে  
 ভিক্ষুকের বেশে মাতা দিয়াছ বিদায়,—নবীন চন্দ্র

his death, he wrote a Bengali prose translation of Homer's Iliad and a half finished Bengali drama—*Mayakanan*—which bear marks of a completely spent-up genius.

Madhusudan's great benefactor, Pandit Iswar Vidyasagar, is reported to have exclaimed on receiving the news of his expiry "বঙ্গের গৌরবরবি গেল যস্তাচলে" (Bengal's Sun of glory has set). Hem and Nabin mourned his loss in moving elegies and Bankim, while paying a tribute to his Promethean genius in the columns of the *Banga Darsan* called on his countrymen to unfurl the banner of nationalism with the word "MADHUSUDHAN" inscribed thereon. His friends and admirers raised a memorial over his grave with the epitaph written by himself before his expiry

দাঁড়াও, পথিক-বর, জন্ম যদি তব  
বঙ্গে ! তিষ্ঠ ক্ষণকাল ! এ সমাধি স্থলে  
(জননীর কোলে শিশু লভয়ে যেমতি  
বিরাম) মহীর পদে মগ্ন নিদ্রাবৃত  
দত্ত কুলোস্তুব কবি শ্রীমধুসূদন !  
যশোরে সাগরদাঁড়ী কবতক্ষ-তীরে  
জন্মভূমি, জন্মদাতা দত্ত মহামতি  
রাজ নারায়ণ নামে, জননী জাহ্নবী !

মাইকেল মধুসূদন দত্ত ।

engraved on it. His birth centenary was celebrated last year in Calcutta under the auspices of Bengal Academy of Literature.

Madhusudan's contribution to our language is simply unique. He invented a language of his own, rich in assonance and consonance, and produced the greatest epic in our literature, introduced Sonnets and Heroic Epistles and laid the foundation of the modern Bengali drama. It is extremely doubtful whether Bengali Literature would have burst forth into signal splendour to-day, if Madhusudan had not infused a lava flood of energy and inspiration into it more than half a century ago. Madhusudan like Milton was 'an alien conqueror.' "His influence on the destinies and history of our literature might be compared to the achievement of Napoleon while he was winning the victories that changed the map of Europe. He could not change the character of a people, nor perpetuate his dynasty. But nothing is as it would have been without him."

It is in Madhusudan's writings that we first meet with that virile and all-round influence of the Western Literature upon the Eastern, an influence which has shaped the destiny and

“ভিন্ন ভিন্ন দেশে জাতীয় উন্নতির ভিন্ন সোপান। সমালোচনার  
কোনই প্রাচীন ভারতের উন্নতি হইয়াছিল; সেই পথে আবার চল  
আবার উন্নতি হইবে। কাল প্রসন্ন, ইউরোপ মহাশয়; সুপদন বহিতেছে  
দেখিয়া, জাতীয় পতাকা উড়াইয়; দেও—তাহাতে নাম লেখ  
শ্রীমধুসূদন।”—বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র

“সমস্ত বিবেচনা করিয়া দেখিলে বঙ্গ-ভাষায় ইহার তুল্য দ্বিতীয় কাল  
দেখিতে পাওয়া যায় না।”—হেমচন্দ্র

“যে অনন্ত মধুচক্র রেখেছ রচিয়া  
কবিতা ভাষারে;  
অনন্ত কালের তবে, গোড়-মন-মধুকের  
পান করি, করিবেক যশসী তোমাতে।”

—নবীনচন্দ্র

“মেঘনাদবধের মত দ্বিতীয় কাব্য বাঙ্গলা ভাষাতে ত নাইই; সমস্ত  
ইউরোপেও অমন একখানা কাব্য ইদানীং পাওয়া দুর্লভ।”

—স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ

‘The present century has produced nothing in verse  
comparable to that of **Madhu Sudan**’.

—R. C. Dutt.



guided the tendencies of the Bengali language and has been instrumental in its phenomenally rapid development.

5. “বিহারী বঙ্গসুন্দরীভালে সঁপিঅ শ্লোকেব শুক্ল যুথী” **Behari Lal Chakravarti**, under whose influence Rabindranath himself came for some time, saw the light at Nimtala (Calcutta) in 1835. Educated at the Sanskrit College in his youth, he wrote several volumes of lyrics of which *Sarada Mangal* is an acknowledged masterpiece. Marked by a tender intermingling of soft words and ‘sweet fancy’, this poem is a beautiful offering at the shrine of

Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate  
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon  
Of human thought or form.”

Dr. B. N. Seal, so excellent a judge on literary

“সূর্যাস্তকালের তুবর্ণমণ্ডিত মেঘমালায় মত সারদামঙ্গলের  
সোণার শ্লোকগুলি বিবিধরূপের আভাস দেয় কিন্তু কোন  
প্রাণে স্থায়ীভাবে ধারণ করিয়া রাখে না, অথচ সুদূর  
সৌন্দর্যাস্বর্গ হইতে একটি পূরবী রাগিণী প্রবাহিত হইয়া  
অস্তরাত্মাকে ব্যাকুল করিতে থাকে।”——রবীন্দ্রনাথ

matters, calls this poem 'a Bengali version of a phantasmagory that should combine the two visions Alastor and Epipsychidion in one.' *Sarada Mangal* abounds in many charming descriptions of natural scenes and is written from beginning to end in a flowing, musical style. Rabindranath had, in all probability, this poem in view when he wrote *Manas Sundari*, *Manas Vraman* and *Valmiki Pratibha*.

Beharilal died in 1894.

### His description of the Himalayas :

“বিশ্ব যেন ফেলে পাছে,      কি এক দাঁড়ায় আছে !  
 কি এক প্রকাণ্ড কাণ্ড মহান্ বাপার !  
 পদে পৃথ্বী শিরে বোম,      তুচ্ছ তারা সূর্য্য সোম,  
 নক্ষত্র নখাগ্রে যেন গণিবারে পারে ;  
 সম্মুখে সাগরান্বরা,      ছড়িয়া রয়েছে ধরা,  
 কটাক্ষে কখন যেন দেখিছে তাহারা ।  
 ঝটিকা ছরস্তু মেয়ে,      বৃকে খেলা করে ধোয়ে  
 ধরিত্রী গ্রাসিয়া সিন্ধু লোটে পদতলে ।  
 জ্বলন্ত অনল ছবি,      ধব্ব ধব্ব জ্বলে রবি  
 কিরণ জ্বলন-জ্বালা মালা শোভে গলে ॥ ”

6. **Hemchandra Banerji**, the great national poet, was born in 1838 of a poor Brahmin family at Gulita in the Hugli District and having

graduated from the Presidency College in 1859, served for some time as a professor of the Sanskrit College and in other educational institutions. He then passed the B. L. Examination and began to practise in the Calcutta High Court where he soon made a name for himself. He acted for a long time as Senior Government Pleader and having lost his eyes in old age, passed away in 1903 in the midst of great distress.

Hem Chandra's maiden poetical efforts *Chinta Tarangini* and *Birbahu Kavya*, though of little moment at present, betokened a bright future. Among his later works, *Vritra Sanhar*, an epic in 24 cantos, several volumes of lyrics, epigrams and translations from foreign poets—the epic and volumes of lyrics will hand down the poet's name to distant generations.

*Vritra Sanhar* is written almost on the same plan as Madhusudan's *Meghnad Badh Kavya*. The central stories and keynotes of both the epics bear remarkable resemblance and Hem Chandra's pen-pictures of such principal characters as Vritra, Rudrapir, Indra, Jayanta and Sachi remind one of Madhusudan's word-portraits of Ravana, Meghnad, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita with slight variations.



There cannot be the least doubt that Hemchandra was considerably indebted to Madhusudan for the execution of the general plan of the epic, though in fairness it should be plainly admitted that he has got the better of his master in depicting pictures of moral grandeur. The description of the debate of gods in the infernal regions (reminding one of the debate of the fallen angels in Pandemonium) and the description of the self-sacrifice of Dadhichi for the welfare of gods are simply magnificent, but certain cantos of the epic require lopping off, if it is to take an artistic shape. The introduction of rhyme—"wretched and lame meeter" as Milton puts it—in some cantos (specially cantos III, V and XI) is not at all in harmony with the general grandeur and sublimity of the epic. The lyrical works of Hem Chandra contain stirring patriotic poems, poems on natural phenomena, love, the current problems of the day and the dark episodes of the poet's own life. Like Milton's, his poem on his blindness touches the tenderest chord of the heart and his *Bharat Sangit* (The Song of Ind) is a magnificent war-chant and should be "sung with the throat of the whirl wind." Almost all civilized and semi-civilized countries of

“হোথা আমেরিকা নব অভ্যুদয়,  
 পৃথিবী গ্রাসিতে করিতে আশয়,  
 হরেছে হুঁইয়া নিজে বীর্যাবলে,  
 চাড়ে হুঁইয়া, ভূমণ্ডল টলে,  
 যেন বা টানিয়া ছিঁড়িয়া ভুলে,  
 নৃতন করিয়া গড়িতে চায় ।

মধ্যস্থলে হোথা আজন্ম পূজিতা  
 চির-বার্ঘ্যাবতী, বীর-প্রসবিতা,  
 অনন্তবে বিনা যুনানী-মণ্ডলী  
 মহিমা-চটাতে জগৎ উজলি  
 কোতুকে ভাসিয়া চলিয়া যায় ॥

আরবা মিসর, পারস্য তুরকী  
 ত্রাতার তিব্বত—অন্য কব কি ?  
 চীন ব্রহ্মদেশ, তরুণ জাপান  
 তারাও স্বাধীন তারাও প্রধান  
 দাসত্ব করিতে করে হেয় জ্ঞান,  
 ভারত শুধুই ঘুমারে রয় ।

বাজ্জের শিঙ্গা বাজ্জ্ এই হবে  
 সবাই স্বাধীন এই বিপুল ভবে,  
 সবাই জাগ্রত মানের গৌরবে

ভারত শুধুই ঘুমারে রয় ॥

the world are free ; should India the home of a "a civilization older than the oldest known to history," alone remain under a foreign yoke? That is the burden of the song.

The epigrams of the poet are free from coarseness and are, on the whole, entertaining.

Hem Chandra's metrical translations of Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*, Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard*, Gray's *Progress of Poesy*, Shelley's *Skylark* and Longfellow's *Psalm of life* are finely done, though the same remark does not apply to his Bengali versions of Shakespear's *Tempest* and *Romeo Juliet*, which, though occasionally inspired by fine touches of poetry, fall far short of his genius. These Bengali versions were sent to Stratford-on-Avon when the Great Shakespeare Jubilee was celebrated amid unique international demonstrations, three hundred years after the Enchanter's birth. His metrical adaptation of Dante's *Inferno*, though of a fragmentary nature, is not a sorry piece of work after all.

On the whole, Hem Chandra is a magnificent figure in the realm of Bengali poetry. The emotional intensity of a Shelley and the finished grace of a Pope or a Bharatchandra are interfused in his

works with the sweet simplicity of a Kabikankan. Bengal will ever reckon in him one of her greatest national poets.

7. **Nabin Chandra Sen** was a poet of the same rank as **Hem Chandra Banerji**. Born in 1846 of a respectable Vaidya family at Nayapara in the District of Chittagong, "meet nurse for a poetic child," he passed the F. A. Examination from the Presidency College and graduated from the General Assembly's Institution in 1868 and having passed the Civil Service Examination, then held in India, became a Deputy Magistrate. His strong sense of justice and sturdy independence of character often brought him into collision with the Anglo-Indian officialdom, but his reputation in the eyes of his countrymen was thereby greatly enhanced. He died in 1909.

The very first work of Nabinchandra *Abakas Ranjini*, a volume of lyrics, made it apparent that a great poet had arisen in the country and the great Bengali novelist and critic Bankim Chandra at once took notice of the fact in the columns of his famous journal *Banga Darshan*. *Pitrihin Jubak*, *Bidhaba Kamini*, *Arya*, *Kirtinasa*, *Michael Madhusudan Dutt* are some of the well-

known poems of this volume. This work was followed by *Palasir Juddha*, (The Battle of Plassey) which simply took the literary world by storm. In Dr. Seal's opinion "Babu Navin Chandra Sen's Battle of Plassey\* is an epic conceived and executed in the latest fashion but one, i.e. in the form of a metrico-historical romance. As such it deals in the modern non-mythological manner with a momentous theme that is closely interwoven with the imagination and the sympathies of the nation, and of course illustrates the pictorial-musical style that appertains to the romantic school." The more remarkable of its passages—specially the debate of the Bengali chiefs including Rani Bhowani of Nator in the Palace of Jagat Seth, the description of Clive's mental agony before the battle, the description of the fight, the laments of Mohan Lal—are in the lips of every lover of Bengali poetry. *Rangamati*, a

“হায় ! মা ভারতভূমি ! বিদরে হৃদয়,  
 কেন স্বর্ণ-প্রসূ বিধি করিল তোমারে ?  
 কেন মধুচক্র বিধি করে সুধাময়  
 পরাণে বধিতে হায় ! মধুমক্ষিকারে ?  
 পাইতনা অনাহারে ক্লেশ মক্ষিকায়,

যদি মকরন্দ নাহি হ'ত সুধাসার ;  
 স্নর্গ প্রসবিনী যদি না হইলে হায়,  
 হইত না রঙ্গভূমি অদৃষ্ট ক্রাড়ার !  
 আফ্রিকার মরুভূমি, সুইস্ পাষণ  
 হ'তে যদি, তবে মাতঃ ! তোমার সম্ভান  
 হইত না এইরূপ ক্ষীণ কলেবর ;  
 হইত না এইরূপ নারী-সুকুমার ।  
 ধমনীতে প্রবাহিত হ'ত উগ্রতর  
 রক্তশ্রোত ; হ'ত বক্ষ বীৰ্য্যের আধার !  
 আজি এ ভারতভূমি হইত পূরিত  
 সজীব-পুরুষ-বহু, দিগ্ দিগন্তর  
 ভারত-গৌরব-সূর্য্য হ'ত বিভাসিত  
 বাঙ্গালার ভাগা আজি হ'ত অন্তর"—পলাশীর যুদ্ধ

romantic poem containing some fine landscape-  
 delineations was published next and then followed  
 in quick succession the three religions poems—  
*Kurukshetra*, *Rainataka* and *Pravas*—which  
 constitute together the Mahabharata of the modern  
 era. The keynote of these poems is the rearing  
 up of a compact Indian nation on the firm basis  
 of a Catholic religion—a religion which knows no  
 distinction of caste and creed, which finely harmo-  
 nises the ideals of Jnan (knowledge), Karma

(Action) and Bhakti (Love) and which has for its ultimate end the establishment of Universal Brotherhood among Mankind. A grand idea, an epic conception, is it not? We reproduce below the remarks of Dr. Seal on *Raivataka* :

“Babu Navin Chandra Sen’s *Raivataka* is the epic of the Hindu religious revival....The grandeur of the situation fails description. A dim pre-historic vista,—a hundred surging peoples and mighty kingdoms, in that dim light, clashing and warring with one another like emblematic dragons and crocodiles and griffins on some Afric shore,—a dark poly-theistic creed and inhuman poly-theistic rites,—the astute Brahmin priest, fomenting eternal disunion by planting distinctions of caste, of creed and of political government on the basis of Vedic revelation,—the lawless brutality of the tall blonde Aryan towards the primitive, dark-skinned, scrub-nosed children of the soil—the Kshatriya’s star, like a huge comet brandished in the political sky, casting a pale glimmer over the land,—the wily Brahmin priests, jealous of the Kshatriya ascendancy, entering into an unholy compact with the non-Aryan Naga and Dasyu hordes, and adopting into the Hindu

Pantheon the Ausric gods of the latter, the trident-bearing Mahadeo, with troops of demons fleeing at his beck, or that frenzied goddess of war, the hideous Kali, with her necklace of skulls,—the non-Aryan Nagas and Dasyus crouching in the hilly jungles and dens like the fell beasts of prey, and in the foreground, the figure of the half divine legislator, Krishna, whom Vishnu, the Lord of the Universe, guides through mysterious visions and phantasms, unfurling, in the fulness of his destiny, the flag of a Universal religion of Vaishnavism which was to hurl down the Brahmin priesthood and their cruel Vedic ritualism, and to establish in their place the Kingdom of God in Mahabharata, one vast Indian Empire, a realised Universal Brotherhood embracing Aryan and non-Aryan in bonds of religious, social and political unity;—a grand design, a scenic pomp, an antique as well as modern significance like this, what national epic can show ?”

*Amitava*, a beautiful religious poem on the life and teachings of Lord Buddha, was produced next, and then after some minor poems (including one on the life and teachings of Christ) followed *Amritava*, a poem whose hero is Lord Gauranga.



*Amar Jiban* (My Life) and *Prabaser Patra* (Letters from Abroad) are two principal prose-works of the poet of which both are interesting, though one should very much wish that the autobiography were free from all touches of egotism which occasionally disfigure it.

Of all Bengali poets, Nabin Chandra has succeeded best in the imparting of a poetic inspiration into the subtle problems of religion and he is one of the most successful of poets in dwelling, in a pictorial-musical style, on a modern historical theme that is closely inter-woven with the imagination and sympathies of a nation. Barring Byron's *Childe Harold*, which contains a powerful description of the battle of Waterloo, one does not come across in the contemporary world-literature a long poem which treats a modern historical theme with as much felicity as *The Battle of Plassey*. Nabin-chandra's verse-melody does not possess the epic dignity of Madhusudan's diction—the sublimity & majesty of his 'sphere-harmony', nor does it possess the volcanic strength and 'energy divine' of Hem-chandra's best lines. Let us take it for what it is. If the word-music of Modhusudan be compared to the reverberating roll of the boundless ocean.

and that of Hemchandra to the tumultuous noise of a mighty river, that of Nabinchandra may be compared to 'the murmur and murmuring sound' of a rushing hill-stream. It has a swing, a rush, a haunting musical vibration which is a rare thing in our literature.

8. **Rabindranath Tagore**, 'the Poet Laureate of Asia,' was born in 1860 of the illustrious Tagore family of Calcutta. Having lost his mother in his boyhood and being the youngest son of his father, Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, he was not brought up in the usual way but was trained under the direct supervision of his father. To the father's influence may be traced that passionate longing for spiritual communion and that tendency to retirement and seclusion which mark out the son in such a singular manner. Rabindranath accompanied his father on a long and extensive tour in Northern India, the Himalayas and thus imbibed a warm and ardent love of Nature. At the age of fourteen, he produced a musical opera *Valmiki Pratibha* (The Genius of Valmiki), which was successfully staged in his Calcutta residence. At the age of seventeen, he went to England to study for the bar and read

English Literature for some time under John (afterwards Lord) Morley. He came back to India after a year (not, fortunately for the world, as a barrister !) and produced shortly after, *Sandhya Sangit* (The Songs of Sunset), which though not a brilliant performance in itself, foreshadows some salient traits of his later works—intense subjectivity of tone, occasional obscurity of vision and fine simplicity of diction. This work was followed by *Pravat Sangit* (The Songs of Sunrise) which is marked by “a greater measure of criticism of life than there is in the earlier work, a higher metaphysical grasp and intellectualism, a greater objectivity as manifested in a newly developed capacity for the imaginative repropuction of the alien and outer phases of Nature’s life” (Dr. Seal). *Prakritir Parishodh*, *Chhāṇi o Gan*, *Kari o Komal*, *Manasi*, *Sonar Tari*, *Chitra*, *Chaitali*, *Katha*, *Kaipana*, *Kshanika*, *Sisu*, *Naibedya*, *Kheya*, *Gitanjali* and a host of other works in poetry and prose (totalling about 150) were published afterwards one after another, which went on enhancing the popularity of the poet. One remarkable fact should be noted here. When Rabindranath attained his thirtieth year, his

father made over the charge of his estate to him. This took him from the 'sweet city of dreaming spires' to Selaidaha, a beautiful place on the Padma in the District of Nadia where he passed long periods of loneliness and seclusion drinking 'the honey-heavy dew' of Nature's beauty. This also furnished him with a golden opportunity to study men and manners in rural areas, which stood him in good stead in writing short stories. In 1911, a grand public meeting was held in Calcutta under the auspices of Bengal Academy of Literature to celebrate the occasion of his completing the fiftieth year and men like Dr. B. N. Seal, Dr. J. C. Bose, Dr. P. C. Ray and Ramendra Sundar Tribedi took part in the function. Valuable presents were made to him on the occasion. The poet successively edited several high-class monthlies—*The Bharati*, *The Balak*, *The Sadhana*, and *The Banga Darsan*—with conspicuous ability and became the recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1914 by publishing his epoch-making *Gitanjali* (or Song Offerings) which brought him unique ovation from all quarters of the globe. A new chapter in his career opened from this time and honour and homage

that he has been receiving since then from both the hemispheres might well excite the envy of any great king, emperor or man of letters in any period of the world's history. It is 'roses, roses, all the way. With myrtle mixed in my path like mad.' The poet's dream of youth has been rea-

“উঠ বঙ্গ কবি,            মায়ের ভাবায়

মুমূর্ষুরে দাও প্রাণ—

জগতের লোক            সুধার আশায়

সে ভাষা করিবে পান ।

\*            \*            \*

বিশ্বের মাঝারে            ঠাই নাই ব'লে

কাঁদিতেছে বঙ্গ ভূমি,

গান গেয়ে কবি            জগতের তলে

স্থান কিনে দাও তুমি ।”—কড়ি ও কোমল

lised. He has secured a place for his mother-tongue in the world's republic of letters.

During the Swadeshi Movement, Rabindranath was a great apostle of Indian nationalism. He then produced many patriotic poems, songs and political pamphlets which stirred the country from corner to corner. One of his political pamphlets penned at that time—*Swadeshi Samaj*—

“আমি স্পষ্ট করিয়া বলিতেছি, রাজা আমাদিগকে মাঝে মাঝে লগুড়াঘাতে তাঁহার সিংহদ্বার হইতে খেদাইতেছেন বলিয়াই যে অগত্যা আত্মনির্ভরকে শ্রেয়োজ্ঞান করিতেছি, কোনদিনই আমি এরূপ দুর্লভ-দ্রাক্ষাগুচ্ছলুন্ধ হতভাগ্য শৃগালের সান্ত্বনাকে আশ্রয় করি নাই। গলার কাছা না লইলে আমাদের গতি নাই, এ কথা আমি কোনোমতেই বলিব না—আমি স্বদেশকে বিশ্বাস করি, আমি আত্ম-শক্তিকে সম্মান করি, আমি নিশ্চয়ই জানি যে, যে উপায়েই হোক, আমবা নিজের মধ্যে একটা স্বদেশীয় স্বজাতীয় ঐক্য উপলব্ধি করিয়া আজ যে সার্থকতা লাভের জন্য উৎসুক হইয়াছি, তাহার ভিত্তি যদি পরের পরিবর্তনশীল প্রসন্নতার উপরেই প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়, যদি তাহা বিশেষভাবে ভারতবর্ষের স্বকীয় না হয়, তবে পুনঃ পুনঃই বার্থ হইতে থাকিবে।”

advocates a form of Non-co-operation which is now associated with the name of **Mahamta Gandhi**. The idea of Non-co-operation finds vent in one of his songs also of the Swadeshi period “ভিক্ষায়াং নৈব নৈব চ”—which taboos the moderate policy of mendicancy and maps out a programme of self-help. We reproduce the song below.

“যে তোমারে দূরে রাখি নিত্য ঘৃণা করে  
 হে মোর স্বদেশ,  
 মোরা তারি কাছে ফিরি সম্মানের তরে  
 পরি তার বেশ !  
 বিদেশী জানে না তোরে, অনাদরে তাই  
 করে অপমান,  
 মোরা তারি পিছে থাকি যোগ দিতে চাই  
 আপন সন্তান !  
 তোমার যা দৈন্ত্য মাতঃ, তাই ভূষা মোর  
 কেন তাহা ভুলি,  
 পরধনে ধিক গর্ব, করি করযোড়  
 ভরি ভিক্ষাবুলি !  
 পুণ্যহস্তে শাক অন্ন তুলে দাও পাতে  
 তাই যেন রুচে,  
 মোটা বস্ত্র বুনে দাও যদি, নিছ হাতে  
 তাহে লজ্জা ঘুচে !  
 সেই সিংহাসন, যদি অঞ্চলটি পাত,  
 কর স্নেহ দান,  
 যে তোমারে তুচ্ছ করে, সে আমারে, মাতঃ  
 কি দিবে সম্মান !

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Almost all the national boycotts, urged by the Congress in the palmy days of Non-co-operation, have been fore-shadowed herein. The world-wide recognition of the poet's genius widened the range of his sympathies and made him feel for the welfare not of his countrymen alone but of humanity at large; and the last world-war impressed upon him the imperative necessity of repudiating the cult of patriotism as a fruitful source of conflicts between different races and nationalities.

“স্বার্থে স্বার্থে বেধেছে সংঘাত,—লোভে লোভে  
ঘটেছে সংগ্রাম ;—প্রলয়-মন্ডন-ক্ষোভে  
ভদ্রবেশী বর্ষবরতা উঠিয়াছে জাগি’  
পক্ষশয্যা হ’তে, লজ্জা সরম তেয়াগি’  
জাতিপ্রেম নাম ধরি, প্রচণ্ড অশ্রায়  
ধর্ম্মেরে ভাসাতে চাহে বঙ্গের বন্যায় ।  
কবিদল চীৎকারিছে জাগাইয়া ভীতি  
শ্মশান কুকুরদের কাড়াকাড়ি গীতি ।” — রবীন্দ্রনাথ

“A trade of barbarians”—Napoleon on war. “War is only trade on a larger scale—the ambitious and powerful trade with the happiness of the peoples—Tolstoi.



The poet is now preaching the gospel of universal love which he thinks the world badly needs for the promotion of peace among the warring nations. This message had been preached by the great Russian *Rishi* Count Leo Tolstoi long before, and another great world-thinker Romain Rolland has also preached it in recent times. It would be a good thing for humanity if instead of the League of Nations founded by Wilson (which Tagore once aptly "y-clept" "The League of Robbers", a convention of great writers and thinkers of all parts of the world were annually held to discuss and give effect to the message. The world of fact is first born in the world of imagination and what wonder universal peace would be established, if the writings of all great poets and thinkers vibrated with the message of Universal love?

Next to the cultivation of literature, the forest-school of Bolpur—Santiniketan (The Home of Peace) as it is called—absorbs the greatest amount of the poet's attention. Rabindranath is at present busy developing this shcool into an international University where some provision has been already made for the education of students of different races and nationalities. This

"I have founded this our Viswabharati to realize the spiritual and intellectual unity of mankind."

—Rabindranath.

education is both literary and scientific and has, as far as possible, the stamp of Indian orientation upon it. The poet thinks a University of this type will tend towards the promotion of harmony and concord among the clashing and conflicting nations of the world.

Rabindranath is the most versatile literary genius of modern times. He has not written any epic but produced many volumes of songs, lyrics, novels, short stories, essays on all manner of subjects, an autobiography, charming epistles and prose-poems—*verse-libre*—in the manner of Baudelaire and Verlaine—a unique and most many-sided literary activity, one would say. Among the European poets, only Goethe and Hugo approach him in this respect.

Rabindranath's songs and lyrics exhibit a most consummate development of romantic poetry. Na-

ture in her playful and fierce moods, simple humanity, the Sublime and the Beautiful—

“A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused

Whose dwelling is in the light of setting suns.”  
Love, Liberty and Beauty, old tales of heroism and sacrifice from the store-houses of Indian history and legend and from the Buddhist scriptures, the child, song-birds—these are the themes of his poetry and he has treated these themes with singular felicity. Suggestiveness—“more is meant than meets the ear”—is the specific mark of all his poetry—his poetry has “two ears”—and there breathes throughout all his writings “such a spirit of intellectual curiosity and of passionate yearnings joined withal to a rare delicacy, a refined sensuousness, an ideality of vision, as is rare in any other contemporary or British man of letters.” He has handled many novel metres—scanned new horizons full of glow and beauty and colour and composed centuries of songs (totalling about 1600), some of which are fiery war-chants, some again, melodies turned to a note of infinite pathos, some others, full of mystical fervour. In fine, a lyrist

and song-writer of his type exquisitely phrasing all the finer moods of the mind it is difficult to find in the entire range of the world's literature. The 'natural magic' of a Wordsworth, the intellectual

“ধরণীর শ্যাম করপুট খানি  
ভরি দিব আমি সেই গীত আনি,  
বাতাসে মিশ্রায়ে দিব এক বাণী  
মধুর অর্থ-ভরা ।

নবীন আষাঢ়ে রচি নব মায়া,  
এঁকে দিয়ে যাব ঘনতর ছায়া,  
করে' দিয়ে যাব বসন্ত কায়া  
বাসন্তী বাস পরা ॥

ধরণীর তলে, গগনের গায়  
সাগরের জলে, অরণ্য ছায়,  
আরেকটুখানি নবীন আভায়  
রঙ্গীন করিয়া দিব ।

সংসার মাঝে কয়েকটি সুর  
রেখে দিয়ে যাব করিয়া মধুর  
দুয়েকটি কাঁটা করি দিব দূর  
তারপর ছুটি নিব ।

সুখহাসি হবে আরো উজ্জ্বল,  
 সুন্দর হবে নয়নেব জল,  
 স্নেহ স্নেহ মাথা বাস গৃহ তল,  
 আরো আপনার হবে ।  
 প্রেয়সী নারীর নয়নে অধরে  
 আবেকটী মধু দিয়ে যাব ভরে  
 আবেকটী স্নেহ শিশুমুখ'পরে  
 শিশিরের মত হবে ।”

mysticism of a Shelley, the æsthetic felicity of a Keats, the philosophic passion of a Browning, the word-painting of a Tennyson, the mystic fervour of a Vaishnava poet, the magic richness of suggestion of a Kalidas—all these one comes across in his finest pieces—in poems like *Badhu* (or *The Reverie of a Bengali Susan*), *Abedan* (*A Prayer*), *Manas Bhraman* (*Flight of Fancy*) *Barsa Mangal* (*Ode to Rains*), *Sarat* (*Autumn*) *Sandhya* (*Evening*), *Purnima* (*The Full-Moon Night*), *Nadi* (*The River*), *Samudra Prati* (*To The Sea*), *Barsa Ses* (*End of the Year*) *Manas Sundari* (*The Intellectual Beauty*), *Urbasi*, *Tajmahal*, *Khokar Janmakatha* (*Story of The Child's Birth*), *Puraskar* (*The Reward*), *Kangalini* (*An Orphan Girl*), *Patita*

"Have stirred my blood as nothing has for years."

—W. B. Yeats

"In reading them one feels, not that they are the curiosities of an alien mind, but that they are prophetic of the poetry that might be written in England if our poets could attain to the same harmony of emotion and idea.....As we read his pieces we seem to be reading the Psalms of a David of our own time, who addresses a God realized by his own act of faith and conceived according to his own experience of life."—The Times.

‘জগৎকলিঙ্গকবি মেঘনাদেয়বাহু’র গদ্য।

বাঙ্গালী ‘আজি’ গানের লাজ, য’ দ্বারা নতুন গদ্য।

—সত্যেন দত্ত

"Tagore's books stand for me at the end of a long line of poets beginning with the Vedic Rishis, with Valmiki and the poets of the Mahābhārata, succeeded by the classical Sanskrit Kavis from Asvaghosa, Bhas, Kalidas, Dandin and Bhababhuti up to Jaydev and Tulsidas. And Tagore's poetry appears to me as the completion, as it were, of the work begun by the Vedic Rishis...Tagore's works prove to us that in the people of India there are still hidden such spiritual forces that we need not fear for the future of India as a seat of highest mental culture that will yet have to teach a great deal to us in the West."—Sylvain Levi



(The Fallen Woman), *Puratan Pritya* (The Old Servant), *Dui Bigha Jami* (Two Bighas of Land), *Meghdut* (The Cloud-Messenger), *Nirjharer Swapnabhanga* (The Fountain Awakened from the Dream), *Sonar Tari* (The Boat of Gold) and hundreds of devotional and amatory songs. If one read nothing of Rabindranath but his *Urbasi*, which Thompson calls "perhaps the greatest lyric in all Bengali literature and the most unalloyed and perfect worship of Beauty which the world's literature contains," one will be impressed by his superb poetic powers. Thompson is right in his assertion, "He is a much greater writer than English critical opinion imagines."\*

Poets, in Shelley's phrase, are "law-givers"—"unacknowledged legislators of the world" "কবির কালের সাক্ষী কালের শিক্ষক" (Nabin Chandra). Enjoy the things of Earth but only that they may lead you "upward and on," serve God by serving Man, "Believe in the Genius of India, believe in its endless power of vitality and adjustment, believe in the heritage of Tapas, sanctity and piety, bequeathed to us by our forefathers," do away

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\* The present writer has dwelt at considerable length on the subject in his *Rabindranath: His mind and Art*.



with the curse of untouchability, carry the torch-light of knowledge from door to door and remove

“হে মোর ছুৰ্ভাগা দেশ বাদেৰে করেছ অপমান,  
 অপমানে হতে হবে তাহাদের সবার সমান ।  
 মানুষের অধিকারে  
 বঞ্চিত করেছ যারে  
 সম্মুখে দাঁড়ায়ে রেখে তবু কোলে দাও সাই স্থান,  
 অপমানে হতে হবে তাহাদের সবার সমান ।”

ignorance and all your social and political disabilities will soon disappear, don't be misled by the glitter and glamour of modern civilization, the so-called material progress of the present-day Western nations is not a sign of peace but of an impending disaster, the East though now fallen on evil times will be the harbinger of world-peace. in future, the inevitable end of patriotism which countenances all immoral acts is destruction—these are some of the cardinal teachings of Rabindranath as embodied in his poems and songs.

Rabindranath once said to Mr. Thompson “There is no doubt that I have conquered my countrymen by my songs. I have heard even

drivers of bullock-carts singing my latest and most up to-date songs." This is true.

As a dramatist, Rabindranath resembles Shelley, Browning and Mæterlinck and has not yet produced any acting play of any appreciable value. His *Chitrangada*, *Raja o Rani*, *Saradotsab*, *Falguni*, *Dakghar*, *Achalayatan*, *Muktadhara*, *Rakta Karabi* are all lyrical symbolical plays, dealing more with the Unseen than with the Seen, more with ideas and ideals than with concrete realities. The very soul of the drama—action, which is the resultant of the play and interplay of passions in its principal characters—is wanting in his plays, which at the bottom give scope to his talent for spinning out cobwebs of idealism. As Thompson observes, "I find them clouded with too much 'sob-stuff' in them and often a tiresome insistence on the tremendous significance of the trivial. The life has gone from them, for the symbolism has been a vampire, sucking the blood of action away." "Beauty without Love is futile," "Selfish love leads only to sorrow and ruin," "Life without Love is barren," "Eternal youth is the cosmic law" these are the ideas which he has worked out in some of his plays. The picture of

the Baul in *Muktadhara* reminds one of India's patriot-saint Mahatma Gandhi, who has preached a new gospel—the gospel of non-violence in politics—

“Who taught us how we lost our inward bliss;  
How strife and discord nature's plan do mar,  
And set 'twixt' man and man a barrier'  
Make brothers curse brothers when they should  
kiss.”

Some of his plays have been acted with success before select audiences in London, Dublin, Hamburg and Peking.

The psychological novel in Bengali Literature has Rabindranath as a pioneer, for his *Noukadubi* and *Chokher Bali* (especially the latter) show the innate tendency of the poet in revealing his plot through the analysis of the emotions of the *dramatis personae*. His early attempts in the range of the novel (viz. *Bauthakuranir Hat*), were attempts in the manner of Bankimchandra and could not be said to have achieved great success. His later works—*Gora* and *Ghare Bire*—sustain his reputation as a novelist. *Gora* is the child of Irish parents, lost in the Sepoy Mutiny, and bred up as an orthodox Bengali. He hates English-

men till his supposed mother breaks the illusion. The book is an Indian *Kim*. It possesses the fulness of detail of the Russian novel and exhibits the cross-currents of Eastern and Western thought in our present-day social life. The hide-bound insularity and bigotry that run rampant in the orthodox Hindu and Sadharan Brahmo Samaj have been nowhere more powerfully depicted. In *Ghare Bire*, the ideal of individualism has been strikingly illustrated in the character of Bimala who like the heroine of *A Doll's House* rebels against the age-old system of women's marriage before they can see and judge for themselves. The shady side of the Swadeshi Movement in which the poet himself took a prominent part has been mercilessly exposed and the scheme of *The Ring and The Book* telling the one story through different minds, has been adapted in the novel. The book has already secured considerable international reputation.

Rabindranath is one of "the world's greatest short story writers." His stories delineate figures and faces so true and life-like, so sparkling and animated, so rich in their variety and beauty, that they seem to be a world by themselves, created by

the will of a great enchanter. "This writer or that has surpassed Rabindranath in some quality or other. But where are we to find a writer of stories so different and so good as *Hungry Stones*, *Living or Dead*, *Subha*, *Cloud and Sun*, *The Kingdom of Cards*, *The Trust Property*, *The Riddle Solved* and *The Elder Sister*? Four of these eight are of the deepest tragedy, a very unusual feature in an Indian writer; two are of tragedy of a less mixed and absolute kind, but sufficiently poignant, with irony salting the bitterness and with tender laughter softening the pathos; one deals with a realm of sheer phantasy, two are ghostly; several are masterly psychological studies. It is strange that his stories have received so little fame in the West; they are the most under-rated of all his work." (Thompson.)

As an essayist, Rabindranath is also a remarkable figure. His critical expositions of Valmiki's *Ramayana*, Kalidas's *Sakuntala*, Kumar's *Samhata* and Meghdut, Bana's *Kadambari* and appreciations of Vidyapati, Ram Mohan, Debendranath, Bankim, Beharilal, Dwizendralal and others, his essays on Beauty, Morality, Folk Literature, National Education etc., his dissertations on politics,

“আজ বঙ্গসাহিত্য আপন অন্তরের মধ্যে এক  
নূতন প্রাণশক্তি, এক বৃহৎ বিশ্বাসের পূলক  
অনুভব করিয়াছে—সমস্ত বঙ্গহৃদয়ের সুখদুঃখ  
আশা আকাঙ্ক্ষার আন্দোলন সে আপনার  
নাড়ীর মধ্যে উপলব্ধি করিতেছে, সে জানিতে  
পারিয়াছে সমস্ত বাঙ্গালীর অন্তর-অন্তঃপুরের মধ্যে  
তাহার স্থান হইয়াছে ; এখন সে ভিখারিণী  
বেশে কেবল ক্ষমতাশালীর দ্বারে দাঁড়ায় নাই,  
তাহার আপন গৌরবের প্রমোদে তাহার অক্ষুণ্ণ  
অধিকার প্রতিদিন বিস্তৃত এবং দৃঢ় হইতে  
চলিয়াছে এখন হইতে সে শয়নে স্বপনে সুখে  
দুখে সম্পদে বিপদে সমস্ত বাঙ্গালীর

গৃহিণী সচিবঃ সখী মিথঃ  
প্রিয়শিষ্যা ললিতে কলাবিধৌ ।

theology and sociology are all products of a master-mind and may fairly bear comparison with the best essays of European writers. To take one specific example, Kalidas's far-famed drama of *Sakuntala*, the prelude strains of admiration for which have been sounded by Goethe, has nowhere been so beautifully and adequately

rendered. The evidence of power and of literary insight, of poetic fancy and of culture that these essays in criticism give is simply astonishing.

In other spheres of literary activity, Rabindranath is not a conspicuous figure, though it must be admitted that he has for the first time, impart-

‘কবিতা আমার বহুকালের প্রেয়সী—বোধ হয় যখন আমার রথীর মত বয়স ছিল তখন থেকে আমার সঙ্গে বাক্‌দত্তা হয়েছিল। তখন থেকে আমাদের পুকুরের ধারে বাটের তলা, বাড়ীভিতরের বাগান, বাড়ীভিতরের একতলা অনাবিকৃত ঘরগুলো, এবং সমস্ত বাহিরের জন্তু, এবং দাসীদের মুখের সমস্ত রূপকথা এবং ছড়াগুলো, আমার মনের মধ্যে ভারি একটা মায়াবাজা তৈরি করেছিল।’

ছিন্নপত্র

ed literary grace to letter-writing and produced prose-poems in our language. His autobiography also “the world will not let willingly die.”

The Government of India Knighted the poet in 1914, but after the horrible Punjab tragedy in 1919, he renounced the title with the following classic utterance—

‘The accounts of insults and sufferings, undergone by our brothers in the Punjab, have trickled through the gagged silence, reaching every corner of India, and the Universal agony of indignation roused in the hearts of our people has been ignored by our rulers—possibly congratulating themselves for imparting what they imagine a salutary lesson.

‘The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in their incongruous context of humiliation, and I, for my part, wish to stand shorn of all special distinction by the side of those of my countrymen who, for their so-called insignificance, are liable to suffer a degradation not fit for human beings.’

Those who have gone through the poet’s storiette *Rajtika*—which was penned long before his being Knighted—will not marvel at this bearing on this part. He has never had any real fancy for the blue ribbon of the Government which he at bottom prizes no more than a tinsel and a gew-gaw.

The poet in the afternoon of life has now attained



“To those turrets, where the eye  
Sees the world as one vast plain  
And one boundless reach of sky.”

He lives in the pure radiance of the spirit, dreams his dreams and sings, and men and women are astir with new hopes and aspirations and have visions of eternal splendour. He is the harbinger of a new race of poets and singers and the builder of the world of to-morrow.

9. Born in Calcutta in the year in which Rabindranath saw the light, Akshay Kumer Baral was the poetical disciple of Beharilal Chakravarti, under whose magnetic influence Rabindranath himself came for some time. His chief lyrical works are *Kanakanjali*, *Pradip*, *Sanksha* and *Esa*. Of these, the first three abound in many lovely love-lyrics and the fourth is one of the most beautiful elegies in our language. Written towards the close of the poet's career upon the loss of his beloved, this elegy is occasionally reminiscent of some lines of *In Memoriam* and contain many passages which touch the tenderest chords of the heart. An undying belief in the existence of life beyond death and calm resignation to the great Task-

Master find expression throughout the threnody.  
We quote some lines from the poem—they will  
soothe many bereaved souls :

‘হা প্রিয়া—শ্মশান দক্ষা, হও পরকাশ !  
তাজিয়াছ মর্ত্যভূমি,  
তবু আছ—আছ তুমি !  
তুমি নাই—কোথা নাই, হয় না বিশ্বাস ।  
এত রূপ গুণ ভক্তি,  
এত প্রীতি অনুরক্তি  
স্বজনে যে পূর্ণতার নাহিক বিনাশ !  
নয়—এ মরণ নয়, দু’দিন বিরহ !  
আলোকে স্ত-বর্ণ ফুটে,  
আঁধারে স্তগন্ধ ছুটে ;  
মিলনে নিঃশঙ্ক প্রেম—যত্ন অনাগ্রহ ।  
বিরহে ব্যাকুল প্রাণ—  
সেই জন তপঃ ধ্যান,  
সেই বিনা নাহি আন, সেই অহরহ ।,

The poet like Tennyson believes

“Thou wilt not leave us in the dust.”  
Thou madest man, he knows not why ;  
He thinks he was not made to die.”

Every person who thinks about the old, old problem of life and death will find much food for thought in this *In Memoriam*.

The poet expired in 1919.

10. In the untimely death of **Ananda Chandra Mitra** of Vikrampur in 1903, Bengal lost a truly promising poet. His early poetical attempt *Mitra Kavya* earned for him the name of a wild nightingale from some quarters, and in the next volume *Hellena Kavya*, a fine piece of Homeric translation, he achieved a greater measure of success. His last great work *Bharat Manjari Mahakavya*, a sort of poetical *Pilgrim's Progress*, is a vast allegorical epic in blank verse describing the social, moral and religious condition of India prior and subsequent to the birth of **Raja Ram Mohan Roy** whose advent has been hailed as godsend making for the infinite good of India and the world at large. The poem is now scarcely studied, though it is marked throughout by a manly music and a charming atmosphere of enhancing suggestions. Next to Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Ananda Chandra handled blank verse with the greatest amount of ability.

## Specimen of his verse :

“কি কাজ বাজায়ে আর সুমুপ্ত ভারতে  
 তুরী ভেরী পাঞ্চজন্ম আশার ছলনে !  
 আর কি জাগিবে কেহ, আর কি গাইবে  
 বীর গাথা, বীর রসে ভাসিবে উল্লাসে !  
 কিম্বা মৃতপ্রাণ আমি বিহীন শক্তি  
 কি গুণে গাইব হায় ! বীরকীর্তি ভরা  
 সে মহাসুর সঙ্গীত ? গাইলেন যাহা  
 সুরচিত্ত সুখকর বীণায়ন্ত্র করে,  
 হেলেনার অক্ষকবি দৈববলে বলী !  
 উঠিত জলদপথে যার প্রতিধ্বনি  
 অমৃতলহরীসম অম্বর পুরিয়া,  
 আবেশে কাঁপিত বিশ্ব, নবরসে মাতি  
 বরষিত পুষ্পাসার সুরকুলাঙ্গনা !” (হেলেনাকাব্য)

11. “মধুর কোমল কাস্ত, হাসি অশ্রু করুণার কবি !”  
 After Rabindranath, **Rajanikanta Sen**, is out of the way the greatest song-writer of Modern Bengal. Born in 1866 at Bhangabari in the District of Pabna, he was educated in his boyhood at Rajshahi and having graduated from the City College, Calcutta in 1889 and passed the B. L. Examination shortly after, spent the rest of

his life at Rajshahi, practising in the Judge's Court and courting the Muses. His songs delight alike the lovers of genuine music and genuine poetry and cover a wide range from devotional hymns to lyrics of love and social satires. Some of his devotional hymns and lyrics of love are so sweet they can be hardly distinguished from the sweetest strains of Rabindranath. Some

“মায়ের দেওয়া মোটা কাপড় মাথায় তুলে নেরে ভাই ;  
 দীন-ছুঃখিনী মা যে তোদের তার বেশী আর সাধ্য নাই !  
 ঐ মোটা সূতোর সঙ্গে মায়ের অপার স্নেহ দেখতে পাই ;  
 আমরা এমনি পাষণ্ড,তাই ফেলে ঐ পরের দোরে ভিক্ষা চাই।  
 ঐ দুঃখী মায়ের ঘরে, তোদের সবার প্রচুর অন্ন নাই,  
 তবু,তাই বেচে কাচ,সাবান,মোজা, কিনে কল্লি ঘর বোঝাই,  
 আয়রে আমরা মায়ের নামে এই প্রতিজ্ঞা করব ভাই,  
 পরের জিনিষ কিনবো না, যদি মায়ের ঘরের জিনিষ পাই।”

of his national songs were highly popular during the Swadeshi Days and are so even now. So also are his social satires which are levelled against dowry-takers, priests, anglicised young Bengalis, lawyers, doctors, judicial and executive

officers of Government...In fine, Rajanikanta was a genuine singer, a real *Sadhaka* and a true

“গাও কবি, বুক-ভ’রে, কণ্ঠ-চিরে গেয়ে যাও গান,  
এ দুর্ভাগ্য-নীল-নদে ভেসে যাও মিশর-মরাল—  
গানে দিক্ ছেয়ে ফেল, সঙ্গীতেই পূর্ণ অবসান—  
তোমার এ কবি জন্ম : কভু যদি হও অন্তরাল,  
বন্ধিম নীলের গতি রাখে যদি লুকায়ে তোমারে,  
তবু গান গেয়ো কবি—সুদূর সিন্ধুর পরপারে।”

spokerman of Modern Bengal. Almost all the volumes of his songs and lyrics—*Bani*, *Kalyani*, *Abhaya*, *Anandamayee* and *Bisram*—are permanent additions to the song-literature of the country. His last work *Amrita*, a volume of little epigrams, is eminently suitable for the study of little school-going folk.

The poet died rather too prematurely in 1910. Bengal made handsome contributions towards his treatment when he put up in the Medical College Hospital, Calcutta, attacked with cancer.

We quote here a couple of his devotional strains :

“কেরে হৃদয়ে জাগে	শান্ত শীতল রাগে
মোহ তিমির নাশে	প্রেম-মলয়া বয় ;
ললিত মধুর অঁখি	করুণা অমিয় মাখি,
আদরে মোরে ডাকি	হেসে হেসে কথা কয় ।
কহিতে নাহিক ভাষা	কত সুখ কত আশা,
কত স্নেহ ভালবাসা	সে নয়ন কোনে রয় ।
সে মাধুরী অনুপম	কাস্তি মধুর কম
মুগ্ধ মানসে মম	নাশে পাপ তাপ ভয় ।
বিষয় বাসনা যত	পূর্ণ ভঙ্গন ত্রুত
পুলকে হইয়া নত	আদরে বরিয়া লয় ।
চরণ পরশ ফলে	পতিত চরণ তলে
স্তুতিত রিপুদলে	বলে ‘হোক তব জয়’॥”

“বেলা যে ফুরায়ে যায়, খেলা কি ভাঙ্গে না, হায়,  
অবোধ জীবন-পথ-যাত্রি !

কে ভুলায়ে বসাইল কপট পাশায় ?  
সকলি হারালি তায়, তবু খেলা না ফুৰায়  
অবোধ জীবন-পথ-যাত্রি !

পথের সম্মল, গৃহের দান,  
বিবেক উজ্জ্বল-সুন্দর প্রাণ,—  
তা’কি পণে রাখা যায়, খেলায় তা’ কে হারায়?  
অবোধ জীবন-পথ-যাত্রি !

আসিছে রাতি, কত র'বি মাতি ?

নাথীরা যে চ'লে যায়,            খেলা ফেলে চ'লে আয়

অবোধ জীবন-পথ-বাঁত্রি ! ”

Such soul-enthraling word-melody—such attraction towards the over-soul one comes across in no modern song-writer but the Bard of Santiniketan.

12. **Debendranath Sen**, the well-known author of *Asoka Guccha* and other volumes of lyrics, was a poet of considerable merit. Born in the 'sixties' in the District of Hugli, he took, in due course, the B. A. degree of Calcutta and the M. A. degree of Allahabad University. He also passed the Law Examination and practised for many years in the Allahabad High Court. Debendranath's poems may be divided into three well-defined groups—poems on Love and Beauty, poems on children and devotional lyrics. Of these, the first group contains some 'gems of purest ray serene.' Feminine loveliness in commonplace aspects has been delineated with exquisite grace in these pieces. “দীপহস্তে যুবতী” (A Lady with a lamp in hand), “খোঁপাখোলা” (Unloosing a tress), “লাজভাঙ্গান” (Doing away with bashfulness), “নিরলঙ্কারা” (Shorn of ornaments),



“ঘোমটা খোলা” (Lifting the veil), “আলতা মোছা” (Rubbing out the lac-dye), “উচ্চ হাসি” (Loud Laughter), “সত্তস্নাতা” (A Lady who has just bathed) are the titles of some of these poems. The little poem “মা” is very nobly conceived and

“তবু ভরিল না চিত্ত ; যুরিয়া যুরিয়া  
কত তীর্থ হেরিলাম । বন্দিবু পুলকে  
বৈতুনাথে ; মুঙ্গেরের সীতাকুণ্ডে গিয়া  
কাঁদিলাম চিরদুঃখী জ্ঞানকীর দুঃখে ;  
হেরিবু বিদ্যাবাসিনী বিদ্বো আরোহিয়া ;  
করিলাম পূণ্য-স্নান ত্রিবেণী-সঙ্গমে ;  
“জয় বিশ্বেশ্বর” বলি, ভৈরবে বেড়িয়া,  
করিলাম কত নৃত্য ; প্রফুল্ল আশ্রমে,  
রাধাশ্যামে নিরখিয়া হইয়া উতলা,  
গীতগোবিন্দের শ্লোক গাহিয়া গাহিয়া  
ভ্রমিলাম কুঞ্জে কুঞ্জে ; পাণ্ডুরা আসিয়া  
গলে পরাইয়া দিল বর গুঞ্জমালা ।  
তবু ভরিল না চিত্ত, সর্ব-তীর্থ-সার  
তাই মা তোমার পাশে এসেছি আবার ।”

deserves to be read by every Bengali boy.

The poet expired in 1920.

13. Mrs. Kamini Roy is the Nightingale of Bengali poetry. Daughter of the Late **Chandicharan Sen**, the famous historical writer and wife of **Babu Kedarnath Roy**, District Sessions Judge, she is one of the first lady-graduates of Calcutta University. There is a touch of sadness and deep meditateness coupled with the Wordsworthian simplicity of language and a fine objectivity of tone in her lyrics in *Alo-o-Chhaya* (Lights and Shadows) and other productions which makes her a sweet and lovable poetess—in no way inferior in rank to Mrs. Browning, ‘half angel and half bird.’ In the words of Dr. Seal, “The poetess’s gift of subtle intellectual analysis, bringing out the uncommon in the common, the hidden grace, the soul of individuality, the note or charm of pathos, in the ordinary scenes and situations of life has in it a rare and exquisite flavour, and is entirely novel in Bengali Literature...A delicate filigree-work, a dance as of silver-twinkling feet, a soft lolling lilt, is the character of her style and cadence, an external form well-suited to the simple Wordsworthian pathos, the subtle intellectual analysis and the womanly delicacy and refinement of culture,

that constitute the soul of Miss Sen's poetry." *Happiness, The Dream of Hope, O My Mother, Whither, O My Destiny, The Pole Star, The Traveller's, Greeting, To A Three Year's Child, My Desire, The Last Bed, In Abraham's Bosom, The Mother's Call, Call Them, The Inner Soul of Beauty, The Story of A Widow, Mahasweta, Pundarika, Chandrapira's Awakening* are the titles of some her best lyrics.

Real happiness consists in serving others, have through thick and thin unshaken faith in the wise dispensation of Providence, don't despise a sinner but have pity on him and try to uplift him from the present state of degeneration, make every sacrifice for the welfare of the mother-land, shake off all false fears and do your duty manfully, hate cant, shun hypocrisy and keep constantly to truth—these are the ideas and sentiments which stream through some of these lyrics.

One of her lyrics entitled "কামনা" echoes some of these ideas—

“ওহে দেব ভেঙ্গে দাও ভীতির শৃঙ্খল,  
 ছিঁড়ে দাও লাজের বন্ধন,  
 সমুদয় আপনারে দিই একেবারে  
 জগতের পায়ে বিসর্জন।

স্বামিন্, নিদেশ তব হৃদয়ে ধরিয়া  
 তোমারি নির্দিষ্ট করি কাজ,—  
 ছোট হোক, বড় হোক, পরের নয়নে  
 পড়ুক বা না পড়ুক তাহে কেন কাজ ?  
 তুমি জীবনের প্রভু, তব ভৃত্য হয়ে  
 বিলাইব বিভব তোমার ;  
 আমার কি লাজ, আমি ততটুকু দিব,  
 তুমি দেহ যে টুকুর ভার ।  
 ভুলে যাই আপনারে, যশঃ অপবাদ  
 কভু যেন স্মরণে না আসে,  
 প্রেমের আলোক দাও, নির্ভরের বল,  
 তোমাতেই তৃপ্ত কর দাসে ।”

14. **Mrs. Mankumari Basu**, niece of Michael Madhusudan Dutt, is not a philosophical poetess like Kamini Roy. She eminently excels in giving a simple poetical garb to the simple feelings and emotions of a woman's heart. Her poems entitled *God, The Worship of Siva, Don't Break The Spell, Our Land, My Little Brother, Pratriidwitiya, Mother, The Mother's Wishes, The Unfortunate Girl* afford wholesome reading. *Kavya Kusumanjali* and *Kanakanjali* are the titles of her lyrical works. *Birbahu Kavya*, a

pseudo-epic in blank verse from her pen describing the fall of *Abhimanyu* in the battle of Kurukshetra, is far from a success.

“আয় রে সোণার বাছা ! কোলে করি আয় !

দেখাইলে দেশে দেশে

ভীষণ রাক্ষসী বেশে

পাষণ মানুষ তোরে কেমনে সাজায় !

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হাদে তোর পায়ে পড়ি, বঙ্গবাসী ভাই !

একবার দেখ চেয়ে

নদীর পুতুল মেয়ে

জীয়েন্তে ধরিয়ে মোরা আগুণে পোড়াই ;

খেতে খেতে যায় ছুটি,

হেসে হয় কুটি কুটি,

তার তরে একাদশী, কি বলিস্ ছাই !

যে জানে না পতিসেবা,

পতিকে বোঝে না যেবা,

তার বিয়ে দিতে বিধি তোর শাস্ত্রে নাই ?

আমি তো বুঝিনে মর্ম,

“পূত পূজ্য আৰ্য্যধর্ম্য”

অধর্ম্মে ডুবাবি কেন—কেন এ বড়াই ?

হায় ! কি তোদের মনে দয়া মায়া নাই ?”

15. **Mrs. Girindramohini Dasi** is another noteworthy poetess. Along with some poems of **Kamini Roy** and **Mankumari Basu**, some of her poems were, sometime ago, englished in an American journal. *Asrukana* ( *A Drop of Tear* ) is her most notable work. Most of the poems of this volume ( e. g. poem on widowhood ) are pervaded by a touch of tenderness.

16. No anthology of modern poetry can be perfect which does not contain the *Jamuna Lahiri* of **Govindachandra Roy**, some religious and patriotic poems of **Sivanath Sastri** and some inspiring national songs of **Dwijendralal Roy**, **Satyendranath Tagore**, **Sarala Debi**, **Pramathanath Roy**, **Choudhuri**, **Bijoychandra Majumdar**, **Monomohan Basu**, **Kaliprasanna Kabyabisharad**, **Atul Prasad Sen**, **Dineshcharan Basu**, **Ramani Mohan Ghosh** and others. Some select pieces of **Govindachandra Das**, the rural poet of East Bengal, also ought to find a place in such an anthology.

17. **NabinChandra Das** of Chittagong has really rendered a good service to our literature by translating with considerable ability into Bengali verse **Kalidas's** *Raghubansam*, *Bharati's* *Kirata-*

*ryuniam*, Magha's *Sisupal Badh* and Gray's *Elegy Written in the country-churchyard*. The necessity of more and more of such translations cannot be too strongly accentuated.

18. The lyrical strains of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das are marked by an intense simplicity, sincerity and spiritual fervour which cannot fail to impress even the most casual reader of his *Sagar Sangit*, *Malancha*, *Antarjami* and *Kishor Kishori*. Himself a devout Vaishnava, his notes are pervaded by a warm Vaishnava spirit which idealises and spiritualises every relation of life. He has made out of the changing moods of the sea—the wondrous, elusive, eternal mystery of the ocean—a wonderful kind of poetry and poured forth her music through the “free and soundless rhythm” of his heart's songs. His *Pilot Eternal* is like Walt Whitman's “*O Captain ! my Captain !*”

Lack of variety in tone and tune is the chief drawback of his strains. Aurabindo Ghosh, the distinguished poet-critic, has rendered Chittaranjan's *Sagar Sangit* into beautiful English verse-forms.

The following is the metrical rendering of the opening song of *Sagar Sangit*—

“O Thou unhopèd-for elusive wonder of the skies,  
Stand still one moment ! I will lead thee and  
bind thee

With music to the chambers of my mind.  
Behold how calm to-day this sea before me lies  
And quivering with what tremulous heart of  
dreams

In the pale glimmer of the faint moonbeams.  
If thou at last art come indeed, o mystery, stay  
Woven by song into my heart-beats from this day  
Sound, goddess, yet ! Into this anthem of the seas  
With the pure strain of my full voiceless heart  
Some rhythm of the rhythmless, some part  
Of thee I would weave to-day, with living  
harmonies

Peopling the solitude I am within.  
Wilt thou not here abide on that vast scene  
Thy vague raiment edged with dream haunts us  
and flees  
Fulfilled in an eternal quiet like the sea’s.”

19. Jogindranath Basu, the well-known biographer of Madhusudan Dutt, has tried to revive the epic strain in this age of lyrics in his



*Prithwiraj* and *Sivaji*. The moral, social and political condition of India in two momentous periods has been graphically described in these works, but their verbal music is occasionally too tame and too effeminate to invest them with epic grandeur.

Some short poems of Jogindranath like *Bharater*

সামান্য এ দেশ নয় । বহু পুণ্য ফলে  
জন্মে নর এ ভারতে । কিন্তু চির দিন  
রাখিও স্মরণ বৎস ! কৰ্ম্মগুণে যদি  
নাহি পার উজ্জ্বলিতে মাতৃভূমি-মুখ  
বুথায় জনম তব ! কি বলিব আর,  
ভারত-সম্ভান তুমি, আৰ্য্য বংশধর,  
ভুলিও না কোন দিন । করি আশীর্ব্বাদ,  
ভদ্র হও, ধন্য হও, ভারতমাতার  
হও উপযুক্ত পুত্র । স্বদেশের হিত  
প্রবতারা সম নিত্য রাখি লক্ষ্য পথে  
হও বৎস ! অগ্রসর । ভারত-স্বননী  
করুন মঙ্গল তব, শুভ আশীর্ব্বাদে ।”

*Manchitra* ( The Map of India ) are really charming.

20. In the untimely death of Satyendranath Dutt ( 1882-1922 ) Bengal lost a truly promising poet. His metrical translations of many famous poems and plays of European and other writers, his lyrics on the birth anniversary of Poet Tagore, on the tragic death of Snehalata and Mr. Stead, on Bankimchandra and his motherland are very beau-

“কে মা তুই বাঘের পিঠে বসে আছিস্ বিরস মুখে ?  
শিরে তোর নাগের ছাতা, কমলমালা ঘুমায় বুকে !

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মা তোর ক্ষেতের ধানরাশি জাহাজ ভরে যায় বিদেশে,  
অন্ন-সুখা গরল হ'য়ে ফিরে আসে মোদের পাশে,  
বনের কাপাস বনে মিলায়, আমরা দেখি চেয়ে, চেয়ে  
অন্ন-বসন বিহনে হায়, মরে তোমার ছেলে মেয়ে !

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ত্রিশূল তুলে নে মা আবার রূপের জ্যোতি পরকাশি,  
ভয় ভাবনা ভাসিয়ে দিয়ে হাস আবার তেমনি হাসি !

চরণতলে সপ্ত কোটি সন্তানে তোর মাগেরে

বাঘেরে তোর আগিয়ে দেগো. রাগিয়ে দে তোর নাগেরে  
সোণার কাঠি, রূপার কাঠি, ছুঁইয়ে আবার দাও গো তুমি  
গৌরবিনী মুক্তি ধর—শ্যামাঙ্গিনী—বঙ্গভূমি !”

tiful. He was an imitator of the lyrical measures of Poet Tagore whom he acknowledged to be "the master-light of all his seeing."

21, Of the younger poets of the day Kalidas Roy, Jatindramohan Bagchi and Kumudranjan Mallik are the most prominent. They are all lyrical poets, giving unmistakable signs of poetical talents in select pieces. Kalidas Roy's *Brindaban Andhakar*, *Prarthana*, *Bangabani*, *Krishanir Byatha...*, Jatindramohan's *Rathojatra* and Kumudranjan's *Chandali*, *Sridhar...* are really fine poems.

Notice is also due to the recent poetical debut of Kazi Nazrul Islam, whose poem *Bidrohi* has called forth high admiration from all quarters. He

"স্বদেশ আমার ! তোমার সেবায় এত্নত লইলুম আজি—  
পূজিতে তোমারে আনিব খুঁজিয়া ধরণীর ধন রাজি ।  
তুমি যদি চাহ প্রাণপ্রিয়ধন—বিধা না জানিবে মনে  
স্বধাব না কথা, প্রফুল্ল বদনে এনে দেব ও চরণে ।"

is a rebel not only in politics but also in poetry, propagating revolutionary ideas and handling metrical measures as freely as possible. Several volumes of his lyrics—*Agnibina*, *Dolanchampa*,

*Biser Bansi* ( proscribed by Government ) —  
have already appeared before the literary public, A  
bright future is in store for this 'young bard,'

### Summary of the Literary characteristics of the Modern Period :

(1) The all-round and vivifying influence of the Western culture upon the Bengali Literature of this period is distinctly discernible.

(2) Epics in the genuine sense of the term have, for the first time, been produced and lyrics have had a most many-sided development during this era.

(3) Blank Verse and many novel lyrical measures have been introduced during this period.

(4) The magnificent energy of a Milton and the warm romantic ardour of a Shelley, a Keats and a Wordsworth have been interfused with the polished grace of a Pope or a Bharatchandra and the ethereal sweetness of melody of the Vaishnava poets in this era.

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### 3. BENGALI PROSE

Examples of the earliest prose writings in our literature are to be traced so far back as the 9th or 10th Century A. D. Ramai Pandit's poem *Shunya Puran*, written about 1000 years ago, whereto reference has been made at the beginning of the book, furnishes a very peculiar specimen of prose. Poet Chandidas's *Chaitanya Prapti* written about 600 years ago and such works as *Ragamayi Kana* and *Karika* by Sahajiya \* Vaishnava authors provide examples of later prose, one chief feature whereof is the almost total absence of verbs in sentences as will appear from the following lines of *Karika*—

“প্রথম শ্রীকৃষ্ণের গুণ নির্ণয় । শব্দগুণ, গন্ধগুণ, রূপগুণ,  
রসগুণও স্পর্শগুণ । এই পাঁচ গুণ । এই পঞ্চগুণে পূর্বরাগের  
উদয় । পূর্বরাগের মূল দুই । চিত্র দর্শনও অকস্মাৎ বংশীশ্রবণ ।,

The vast body of prose written by Sahajiya authors and writers on Jurisprudenace from the

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\* The Sahajiya cult is a protest against the asceticism of Buddhism and lays stress on the senses through which alone can man attain his ultimate goal-

17th to the 18th century, though occasionally quaint, approaches the language of our day as regards the simplicity of style. The following lines from *Jnanadi* written about two centuries back will elucidate the remark—

“অতএব অজ্ঞানি জনেহ পরমেশ্বর শ্রীকৃষ্ণকে জ্ঞান করিতে পারে না। এখন তুমি সত্য কহ তুমি তুমার ঠাই পরমেশ্বর শ্রীকৃষ্ণ সত্য কি মিথ্যা। অজ্ঞানী জীব কহেন আমি অজ্ঞানী কখন ঐ পরমেশ্বর শ্রীকৃষ্ণের মুখের শব্দ আমার কর্ণে শুনি নাই এবং আমার চক্ষুতেহ তাহার স্পর্শ পাই নাই এবং আমার চক্ষেতেহ তাহার শরীরে রূপ দেখি নাই এবং আমার জিহ্বাতেহ তাহার প্রসাদের রস পাই নাই এবং আমার নাসিকাতেহ তাহার শরীরের গন্ধ পাই নাই অতএব এখন সত্য বুঝিলাম আমি অজ্ঞানী আমার ঠাই পরমেশ্বর শ্রীকৃষ্ণ মিথ্যা।”

Put commas and semicolons and substitute “ও” for “হ” in the above extract and it will read like the language of our day. \*

In 1778, one Mr. Halhed, an Englishman, wrote a book on Bengali Grammar. Mr. Wilkins set up a Bengali printing press at Hugli and composed a Bengali Grammar Mr. Foster

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\* The above has been adapted from Dr. D. C. Sen's Saral Bangla Sahitya.

wrote the first Bengali Dictionary in 1799 and also rendered the Government laws from English into Bengali. At this stage. Mr. Carey set up with considerable difficulty a Bengali printing press at Serampur and in collaboration with Messrs Thomson, Martin and Marshman published a fairly readable version of the Holy Bible and other works. They also started a journal—*Samachar Darpan* which helped the growth of Bengali journalism. For purposes of efficient administration, it was essential that Englishmen should know Bengali and with this end in view and with a view to facilitate the work of the Christian Missionaries, the Fort William College was founded at Calcutta in 1800 A. D. to teach Bengali to British youths. Mr. Carey was entrusted with the management of the college. He appointed some learned Pandits as professors of the institution. The want of suitable text-books (specially prose works) was at once felt. Mr. Carey asked the professors to supply this desideratum. Upon this, Rajiblochan Mukherji wrote *Krishna Chandra Charitra* \* in 1805, Ramram Basu

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\* This book was published in London in 1811.

wrote *Pratapaditya Charitra* in 1806 and Mrityunjaya Vidyalkankar published *Rajalali*—a history of many ancient Hindu and Bauddha kings and Mahomedan rulers—in 1808, *Probodh chandrika* in 1813 and *Purusa Pariksha* ( being a translation of Vidyapati's Sanskrit work ) in 1814. The style of all these works save *Krishna chandra Charitra*, which is by the bye full of many new historical anecdotes, is barbarously heavy, most of the sentences containing long, tooth-breaking compounds and a superabundance of metaphors. The writers had no doubt the characteristics of the Sanskrit prose style at its worst in view, when they wrote these books. A sentence quoted from Mrityunjaya Vidyalkankar's *Probodh Chandrika* will give a general impression of the style of these writers—

“কোকিল কলালাপ বাচাল যে মলয়াচলনিল যে উজ্জলচ্ছী-  
করাত্যস্থ নিৰ্বাস্তুঃ কণাচ্ছন্ন হইয়া আসিতেছে।”

It is twelve annas Sanskrit and four annas Bengali. The style of *Krishna Chandra Charitra* is a bit improved and is the precursor of a better style in the near future. Persian words occur too frequently in the prose literature of this period.



The great impetus given by the Christian Missionaries of Serampur to Bengali prose literature in the beginning of the 19th century led to its rapid growth and development.

**Raja Rammohan Ray**, the first great nationalist and internationalist of Modern India, was one of the makers of modern Bengali prose. Born in 1774 of a Brahmin family at Radhanagar in the District of Hugli, Rammohan toured widely in his youth and acquired mastery, over several languages—Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, English, Hebrew and Greek. He was an “irresistible” dialectician, cornering his opponent from point to point in a debate. To save Hinduism from the sweeping onrush of Christianity, he combined all that was living and life-giving in Indian and European culture and laid the corner-stone of a new religious order known as Brahma Samaj, was mainly instrumental in the removal of Sati rites and lent a helping hand to Macaulay in his endeavour to pass the Western Education Bill. He went to England in 1831 to represent certain matters on behalf of the Emperor of Delhi and travelled all over the continent in this connection. The splendid ovation which was then showered

upon him in Europe still transmits a thrill of pride through every Indian heart. He passed away in 1833, full of honours though not of years. Wordsworth's well-known lines on Milton are well applicable to him:

“Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart ;  
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea,  
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free.  
So didst thou travel on life's common way  
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart  
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.”

The master passion of his life was to turn out men “enflamed with the study of learning and the admiration of virtue; stirred up with high hopes of living to be brave men and worthy patriots, dear to God, and famous to all ages.”

Rammohan made a princely contribution to Bengali Literature. He published a translation of the Upanishads in 1816 and started a Bengali newspaper *Kaumudi* (1819) and a Bengali periodical *Brahman Sebadhi* with a view to give a wide publicity to his religious views. He also wrote many poems and songs, which were once

“মনে কর শেষের সে দিন কি ভয়ঙ্কর ।  
 অন্যো বাক্য কবে কিন্তু তুমি রবে নিরুত্তর ॥  
 বার প্রতি যত মায়া,      কিবা পুত্র কিবা জায়া  
    তার মুখ চেয়ে এত হইবে কাতর ॥  
 গৃহে হয় হয় শব্দ,      সম্মুখে স্বজন স্তব্ধ  
    দৃষ্টিহীন, নাড়ী ক্ষীণ, হিম কলেবর ।  
 অতএব সাবধান      ত্যজ দণ্ড অভিমান,  
    বৈরাগ্য অভ্যাস কর সাহসে নির্ভর ॥”

enthusiastically recited by his followers and composed an original Bengali Grammar known as *Gauriya Vyakarana*. His prose writings (e.g., his speech on the removal of *Sati* rites and discussions with Bhattacharya, Goswami and Christian Missionaries on religious matters) are considerably free from long-drawn compounds—“words of learned length and thundering sound” which characterise the compositions of the professors of the Fort William College. But being devoted to highly philosophical and controversial topics, his language is generally a bit dry, and, as such, not well suited to high artistic purposes. Still as the first harmoniser of the Eastern and Western ideas, as the first writer of simple, readable prose, Ram

Mohan will ever occupy a most honoured place in the annals of our literature.

#### SPECIMEN OF HIS PROSE.

“চিত্তশুদ্ধি হইলে পর ব্রহ্মজ্ঞানের অধিকার হয় ; এই হেতু তখন ব্রহ্ম বিচারের অধিকার জন্মে । যদি ব্রহ্ম লক্ষ্য এবং বুদ্ধির গ্রাহ্য না হয়েন তবে কিরূপে ব্রহ্মতত্ত্বের বিচার হইতে পারে—এই সন্দেহ পরে দূর করিতেছেন । এই বিশ্বের জন্ম, স্থিতি ও নাশ যাহা হইতে হয় তিনি ব্রহ্ম । অর্থাৎ বিশ্বের জন্ম স্থিতি ভঙ্গের দ্বারা ব্রহ্মকে নিশ্চয় করি । যে হেতু কার্য-কারণ থাকে, কার্য না থাকিলে কারণ থাকে না !”

The next great writer is **Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar**. Born in 1820 of a poor Brahmin family at Birsinha in the district of Midnapur, Iswar Chandra was educated at the Sanskrit College, Calcutta, where he received the unique distinction of “Vidyasagar” (The Sea of Learning) at the close of his academic career. He was at first appointed Head Pandit of the Fort William College when he wrote *Basudeb Charit* for the students of the College. He was afterwards appointed Professor and, later on, Principal of the Sanskrit College and Inspector of Schools for the districts of Hugli, Nadia, Burdwan and Midnapur.

He resigned the Government service in 1858 owing to a divergence of opinion with the Director of Public Instruction. He laid the foundation of lots of Model Vernacular Schools and started the Metropolitan College (now fitly styled "The Vidyasagar College") at Calcutta and a High School at his native village. He succeeded after a strenuous tug-of-war with the orthodox section of the Hindu community in having an act legalising widow-remarriage among the Hindus passed through the legislature. The Bethune College of Calcutta owed not a little of its existence to his noble efforts. He also fought hard against polygamy, which was then widely current in the country, and was eminently noted for his charities which amounted to Rs. 1500 a month. Countless orphans and widows were maintained by him, and many eminent sons of the soil also (like Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Nabin Chandra Sen) were helped by him in the rainy day. He was thus described by Madhusudan Dutt : "He has the simplicity of an old Rishi, the energy of an Englishman, and the heart of a Bengali mother." Verily,

"He was a man, take him for all in all,  
I shall not look upon his like again."

The tidal wave of his deeper soul  
 "Into our inmost being rolls,  
 And lifts us unawares  
 Out of all meaner cares."

He breathed his last in his Calcutta residence in 1891.

Vidyasagar may be rightly regarded as the "Father of Modern Bengali Prose." Rammohan's language is mainly the language of high philosophy and acute controversy and is marked by a commonplaceness of form and expression, not well calculated to produce highly wholesome effects. It was Vidyasagar who first wrote simple yet dignified prose, eminently suitable for all artistic purposes and ushered in a new era in our language. Vidyasagar's *Sakuntala* and *Sitar Banabas* are Bengali classics, presenting the glories of Sanskrit Literature in an attractive form. His pamphlets on widow-remarriage, polygamy and

অভ্যাস দোষে, তোমাদের বুদ্ধি-বৃত্তি ও ধর্ম প্রবৃত্তি সকল  
 এরূপ কলুষিত হইয়া গিয়াছে, ও অতিকৃত হইয়া  
 রহিয়াছে যে হতভাগা বিধবাদিগের ছরবস্থা দর্শনে,  
 তোমাদের চিরশুদ্ধ নীরস হৃদয়ে কারুণ্য রসের সঞ্চার

হওয়া কঠিন, এবং পাপের প্রবল স্রোতে দেশ উচ্ছলিত  
 হইতে দেখিয়াও মনে স্বর্ণার উদয় হওয়া অসম্ভাবিত।  
 তোমার প্রাণতুল্য কন্যা প্রভৃতিকে অসহ্য বৈধব্য যন্ত্রণা-  
 নলে দগ্ধ করিতে সম্মত আছ; কিন্তু কি আশ্চর্য্য! শাস্ত্রের  
 বিধি অবলম্বন পূর্ব্বক, পুনরায় বিবাহ দিয়া তাহাদিগকে  
 দুঃসহ বৈধব্য যন্ত্রণা হইতে পরিত্রাণ করিতে এবং আপনা-  
 দিগকেও সকল বিপদ হইতে মুক্ত করিতে সম্মত  
 ,নহ।.....হায় কি পরিতাপের বিষয়! যে দেশের  
 পুরুষজাতির দয়া নাই, ধর্ম্ম নাই, ন্যায় অন্যায় বিচার নাই,  
 হিতাহিত বোধ নাই, সদসম্মিবেচনা নাই, কেবল লৌকিক  
 রক্ষাই প্রধান কর্ম্ম ও পরম ধর্ম্ম; আর যেন সে দেশে  
 হতভাগা অবলাজাতি জন্মগ্রহণ না করে।

হা অবলাগণ! তোমরা কি পাপে ভারতবর্ষে আসিয়া  
 জন্মগ্রহণ কর, বলিতে পারি না।

History of Sanskrit Literature are valuable national acquisitions, and he also rendered a good service to his country by translating for tender school-going folk Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, *Betal Panchabinsati*, some fables of *Æshop* and sundry other works. He occasionally contributed to the *The Somaprakas* and *The Tattabodhini*

*Patrika*—both powerful periodicals of his time—and began to write his autobiography which was not completed. He also published a Bengali translation of portions of the original Mahabharata in the columns of *The Tatwabodhini Patrika* but discontinued the effort when Kaliprasanna Sinha took upon himself the charge of bringing out a faithful Bengali translation of the entire Mahabharata.

Vidyasagar's style, though on the whole good, is occasionally heavy, owing to the combination of too many compound words.

#### SPECIMEN OF HIS PROSE.

“মহর্ষি, শাস্ত্রের প্রতি এই সন্দেহ নির্দেশ করিয়া, শকুন্তলাকে সম্বোধন করিয়া কহিলেন,—বৎসে ! এক্ষণে তোমাকেও কিছু উপদেশ দিব। আমরা বনবাসী বটে, কিন্তু লৌকিক বৃত্তান্তেও নিতান্ত অনভিজ্ঞ নহি। তুমি পতিগৃহে গিয়া গুরুজনদিগের শুশ্রূষা করিবে, সপত্নীদিগের সহিত প্রিয়সখী ব্যবহার করিবে, পরিচারিণীদিগের প্রতি সম্পূর্ণ দয়াদাক্ষিণ্য প্রদর্শন করিবে, সৌভাগ্য গর্বে গর্বিতা হইবে না, স্বামী কার্কশ্য প্রদর্শন করিলেও রোষবশা ও প্রতিকূলচারিণী হইবে না; মহিলারা একরূপ ব্যবহারিণী হইলেই, গৃহিণীপদে প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়, বিপরীতকারিণীরা কুলের কণ্টক স্বরূপ। ইহা



কহিয়া বলিলেন,—দেখ গোতমীই বা কি বলেন ? গোতমী কহিলেন,—বধূদিগকে এই বই আর কি কহিয়া দিতে হইবে ? পরে শকুন্তলাকে কহিলেন,—বাছা ! উনি যে গুলি বলিলেন, সকল মনে রাখিও ।” ( শকুন্তলা )

“অত্রত্য পুরুষজাতি, কতিপয় অতিগর্হিত প্রথার অনুবর্তী হইয়া হতভাগ্য স্ত্রী-জাতিকে অশেষ প্রকারে যাতনা প্রদান করিয়া আসিতেছেন । তন্মধ্যে বহু বিবাহ প্রথা এক্ষণে সর্ববাপেক্ষা অধিকতর অনর্থকর হইয়া উঠিয়াছে । এই অতি ক্ষয়ন্ব্য অতি নৃশংস প্রথা প্রচলিত থাকাতে, স্ত্রীজাতির দুঃস্বভাব ইয়ত্তা নাই । এই প্রথার প্রবলতা প্রযুক্ত, তাঁহাদিগকে যে সমস্ত ক্রেশ ও যাতনা ভোগ করিতে হইতেছে, সে সমুদয় আলোচনা করিয়া দেখিলে হৃদয় বিদীর্ণ হইয়া যায় । ফলতঃ এতদ্ব্যতীত অত্যাচার এত অধিক ও এত অসহ্য হইয়া উঠিয়াছে যে, যাহাদিগের কিঞ্চিৎমাত্র হিতাহিত বোধ ও সবিবেচক শক্তি আছে, তাদৃশ ব্যক্তিমাত্রেই এই প্রথার বিষম বিবেচী হইয়া উঠিয়াছেন । তাঁহাদের আন্তরিক ইচ্ছা, এই প্রথা, এই দণ্ডে রহিত হইয়া যায় ।”

( বহু বিবাহ বিষয়ক প্রস্তাব )

Before we come to Akshaykumar Dutt, the next great literary figure, a passing reference is due to the writings of Maharshi Debendranath

Tagore. Born in Calcutta in 1818, he was a pillar of the Brahmo Samaj and did yeomen's service to the cause of our literature by starting the famous journal *Tatwabodhini Patrika* in 1843 under the able editorship of Akshaykumar Dutt. He published a Bengali translation of the Rig Veda and the Upanisads and wrote his autobiography and critical expositions of Brahmoism,

“আমি যা চাই তাহাই হইল। বিষয় সম্পত্তি সকলই হাত হইতে চলিয়া গেল। যেমন আমার মনে বিষয়ের অভিলাষ নাই, তেমনি বিষয়ও নাই, বেশ মিলে গেল।

\* \* হে ঈশ্বর, আমি তোমা ছাড়া আর কিছুই চাই না। \* \* চাকরের ভিড় কমাইয়া দিলাম, গাড়ী ঘোড়া নীলামে দিলাম। খাওয়া পরা পরিমিত করিলাম, ঘরে থাকিয়া সন্ন্যাসী হইলাম। একবারে নিকাম হইলাম। হে ঈশ্বর, অতুল ঐশ্বর্যের মধ্যে তোমাকে না পাইয়া প্রাণ ওষ্ঠাগত হইয়াছিল—এখন তোমাকে পাইয়া আমি সব পাইয়াছি।—” মহর্ষির আত্মজীবনী।

which bear the stamp of his deep meditation.' Some of his letters, published in book-form,

clearly reveal what high stuff he was made of.\* He, it is said, once sent back a letter of his son-in-law without going through its contents, because it was written in English! He was so dead against Anglomania! His religious utterances amidst many silences were eminently inspiring.

Akshaykumar Dutt was born in 1820 at Chupi near Navadwip in the district of Nadia. He read in the Oriental Seminary, Calcutta, for some years after which he prosecuted his studies privately and became well-versed in English, Latin, French, Sanskrit, Persian and some other languages. He came in the prime of his youth in contact with Iswar Chandra Gupta and contributed some illuminating papers to his *Pravakar*. He next came under the magnetic influence of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore who put him in charge of *The Tatwabodhini Patrika*, which he edited for many years with singular ability. He embraced Brahmoism and expired in 1886.

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\* "Letters are the most significant memorials a man can leave behind him."

Akshaykumar is one of the makers of modern Bengali prose. His style is always pure, chaste and vigorous and he is the pioneer in the art of adapting the Bengali language to the expression of scientific and philosophical terms—"Indianising European science" as Rev. John Anderson puts it. His principal works are *Charu Path* (in 3 parts) and *Bharatbarshiya Upasak Sampradaya*, of which the former contains some thoughtful literary and scientific essays and the latter is a store-house of interesting information on social and religious topics. *Bahya Bastu o Dharmaniti* (Outward Objects and Morality), another work of Akshaykumar, is a beautiful book of translation.

#### SPECIMEN OF HIS PROSE.

“দুই শাস্ত্রধারী, সহস্রাবদন প্রাচীন পুরুষ এই শ্রেণীর মধ্যস্থলবর্তী অপূর্ব সিংহাসনে উপবিষ্ট ছিলেন। প্রাচীনের মধ্যে এমন সুন্দর পুরুষ আর দৃষ্টি করি নাই। বিদ্যাধরী कहিলেন, একজনের নাম বাল্মীকি, আর একজনের নাম হোমর। দক্ষিণ ভাগে হোমর এবং তাহার বামভাগে বাল্মীকি এক একখানি পরম রমণীয় পুস্তক হস্তে করিয়া অবস্থিতি করিতেছিলেন। বাল্মীকির বাম পার্শ্বে এক পরম রূপবান্ যুবা পুরুষ চিত্রিত পরিচ্ছদ পরিধান

করিল। বিবিধ বর্ণ-বিভূষিত কুম্বাসনে উপবিষ্ট ছিলেন। ঐ আসনের সৌরভে সর্বস্থান আমোদিত হইতেছিল। তিনি নাকি উজ্জয়িনী নিবাসী নৃপতি বিশেষের সভাসদ থাকিয়া নৃপতি অপেক্ষা শতগুণে কীর্তিদেবীর প্রিয়পাত্র হইয়াছেন। তাঁহার বামপার্শ্বে মাঘ, ভারবি, ভবভূতি, ভারতচন্দ্র প্রভৃতি স্ব স্ব মর্যাদানুসারে যথাক্রমে এক অশেষ শোভাকর উৎকৃষ্ট আসনে উপবিষ্ট ছিলেন। কিন্তু বৃদ্ধ বাল্মীকির যেরূপ স্বভাব-সিদ্ধ সরল ভাব ও অকৃত্রিম অনুপম শোভা, তাঁহাদের কাহারও সেরূপ নহে। তাঁহাদের উত্তম শোভা আছে তাহার সন্দেহ নাই; কিন্তু অনেকেরই শরীরের সৌন্দর্য্য অপেক্ষায় বস্ত্রালঙ্কারের শোভা অধিক।.....ওদিকে হোমরের পাশ্বে বর্জিল ডাণ্টে, মিল্টন, সেক্সপিয়র, বায়রন প্রভৃতি শত শত রসাদ্র'চিত্ত সুপ্রসিদ্ধ কবি যথাযোগ্য স্থানে অবস্থিত ছিলেন। সহৃদয় সেক্সপিয়র যে রত্নময় সিংহাসনে সমারূঢ় ছিলেন, তাহা এই শ্রেণীর সকল আসন হইতে উন্নত ও জ্যোতিমান বলিয়া প্রতীয়মান হইল। এই শ্রেণীর অত্যাশ্চর্য্য অপূর্ব্ব শোভা অবলোকন করিয়া আমার অশুঃকরণ একেবারে মোহিত হইয়া গেল।”

( চারুপাঠ, ৩য় ভাগ )

**Pearichand Mitra, (1814-1883),** who wrote under the nom-de-plume of **Teckchand Thakur**, rendered no mean service to our literature. So long, good Bengali books were written in

a more or less learned style, and it was the general impression in the country that no good work could be written in any other style. Pearichand readily discovered that unless efforts were directed to check the progress of assimilation of the Bengali language to Sanskrit, its independent existence would be nowhere. This made him start a

“যে ভাষা সকল বাঙ্গালীর বোধগম্য এবং সকল বাঙ্গালী কর্তৃক ব্যবহৃত, প্রথম তিনিই তাহা গ্রন্থ প্রণয়নে ব্যবহার করিলেন। এবং তিনিই প্রথম ইংরাজি ও সংস্কৃতের ভাণ্ডারে পূর্বগামী লেখকদিগের উচ্ছিন্ন বিশেষের অনুসন্ধান না করিয়া স্বভাবের অনন্ত ভাণ্ডার হইতে আপনার রচনার উপাদান সংগ্রহ করিলেন। “এক আলালের ঘরের দুলাল” নামক গ্রন্থে এই উভয় উদ্দেশ্য সিদ্ধ হইল। ‘আলালের ঘরের দুলাল’ বাঙ্গলা ভাষায় চিরস্থায়ী ও চিরস্মরণীয় হইবে।’

বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র ।

Bengali monthly (1854) and write *Alaler Gharer Dulal* (The Spoilt Child) and sundry minor works in simple colloquial language, which produced remarkable effects on the manner of writing of his successors—specially the great **Bankim Chandra**.

Chatterji, who built up a masterly style out of the intermingling of the simple and the compound style. *Alaler Gharer Dulal* is the first attempt at fiction writing in our language. The picture of Thack Chacha has been powerfully drawn herein.

### Specimen of Pearichand's Prose.

“হলধর, গদাধর ও মতিলাল গোকুলের বাঁড়ের স্তায় বেড়ায়—বাঁহা মনে যায় তাহাই করে কাহার কথা শুনে না । কাহাকেও মানে না । হয় তাস নয় পাসা নয় মুড়ি নয় পায়রা নয় বুলবুল একটা না একটা লইয়া সর্বদা আমোদেই আছে ; খাবার অবকাশ নাই শোবার অবকাশ নাই বাটীর ভিতর বাইবার ক্ষুদ্র চাকর ডাকিতে আসিলে অমনি বলে বা বেটা বা আমরা বাব না । দাসী আসিয়া বলে, অলো মা ঠাকুরানী যে শুভে পান না তাহাকে বলে দুর্ হ হারাম-জাদ । দাসী মধ্যে মধ্যে বলে, আ মরি কি মিষ্ট কথাই শিখেছ ।”

A passing reference may be made here to the literary labours of Dr. Rajendralal Mitra (1824—1891), the distinguished antiquarian and scholar. He started two periodicals *Bibidhartha Sangraha* (1851) and *Rahasya Sandharbha*, which bore

“ভিলোত্তমার বে কোন স্থানে নয়ন নিক্ষেপ করা  
 যায়, তাহাতেই প্রকৃত কবির লক্ষণ বিলক্ষণ প্রতীত  
 হয় সর্বত্রই সুচারু রসাত্মক ভাব অতি প্রোক্ষণ  
 বাক্যে বিভূষিত হইয়াছে।”      বিবিধার্থ সংগ্রহ।

the stamp of his kaleidoscopic scholarship, argu-  
 eyed observation and patient research. He also  
 wrote a book of Natural Geography, one of the  
 first (if not the very first) books of the kind in  
 our language. He wrote in all 50 learned treatises  
 in English and Bengali divided into 128 volumes  
 of no less than 33000 pages—a unique specimen  
 of penmanship !

The next great prose-writer is **Bhudeb Chan-  
 dra Mukherji** (1825—1894). Descended from a  
 learned Pandit family of Napitpara in the district  
 of Hugli, he was first educated at the Sanskrit  
 College and later on, at the Hindu College and  
 held high offices in the Education Department.  
 He was an orthodox Brahmin and contributed  
 Rs. 16,0,000 towards the promotion of Sanskrit cul-  
 ture and the establishment of two charitable dis-  
 pensaries.



Bhudeb's was an extraordinarily sane and sanguine mind which never lost its faith in the time-honoured traditions of the race, despite his Western culture, and he employed his versatile powers to discover the reason behind the age-old usages of his society.\* His social, domestic

“বালাবধি আমার সংস্কার যে, ভোগে প্রকৃত সুখ নাই, কর্ম্ম সম্পাদন করাতেই সুখ। কেমন করিয়া সংস্কার হইয়াছিল তাহা ঠিক বলিতে পারি না। তবে এইমাত্র মনে পড়ে, পিতৃঠাকুর আমার পঠদশার সর্বদা বলিতেন, “ছাত্রানামধ্যনং তপঃ” আর আমার বয়ঃপ্রাপ্তির পর দীক্ষাগ্রহণ হইলে প্রতি প্রত্যুষে অস্তুতঃ একবার করিয়া বলিতাম “যৎ-করোমি জগন্মাতস্তদেব তব পূজনং” আমার দৃঢ় বিশ্বাসও তাই, একাগ্রচিত্তে কার্য্যসম্পাদনের নিমিত্ত পরিশ্রম করাই প্রকৃত পূজা।”—ভূদেবচন্দ্র।

and critical essays reveal keen penetration and are couched in a simple, beautiful style. It is high time that his works should be closely studied and not relegated to the dust and silence

\* “A deep meaning resides in old customs.”—Schiller.

of the upper shelf as they have most unfortunately been in recent years. He might well be called 'the Addison of Bengal.'

**Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan** (1820-1884), Editor of *The Samprakash*, was a powerful journalist and wrote a very beautiful book *Deragener Martye Agama*, containing illuminating notes (specially valuable to a tourist) on all important places and persons in Ancient and Modern India.

**Rangati Nyayaratna** (1830-1893) was the first to compile a systematic history of Bengali Literature. He got much help in the preparation of this work from **Iswar Chandra Gupta's** collection of biographies of the old Bengali poets. A good, deep and interesting book, his *Bangla Bhasa Bishayak Prastab* deserves the perusal of every lover of the Bengali language.

**Rajnarayan Basu** (1825-1900) closes the old school of prose writers. He was a very good man and luminous writer, giving, in a simple homely style, a mass of useful information on many interesting topics of his time. His *Shekal o Ekal* contains a vivid contrast of Bengali social life prior and subsequent to the influx of Western ideas and his lectures on the Bengali language

and literature indicate, in a brief compass, the main milestones in the annals of our literature from very early times down to his own day.

## B. FICTION

**Bankimchandra Chatterji**, 'father of Bengali fiction,' saw the light in 1838 at Kanthalpara in 24-Perganas. Descended from a respectable Brahmin family, he was a brilliant scholar of his time, standing first in the first B. A Examination of the then newly established Calcutta University. He joined the Provincial Executive Service, but unlike the average run of Deputy Magistrates he exhibited considerable independence in the discharge of his official duties. He passed away in 1894.

**Raja Rammohan Roy** and **Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar** laid the corner stone of Modern Bengali Prose Literature. But it was reserved for another gifted son of Bengal to rear up a stately Pantheon over it. **Bankim Chandra** created and highly developed Bengali fiction and taught his countrymen how to write critical, philosophical and miscellaneous essays of high literary flavour. He started the Bengali periodical *Banga Darsan* (the ablest journal the

country has yet seen) which at once took the literary world by storm by virtue of its brilliant contents and set up a current of creative literary activity throughout the length and breadth of Bengal.\*

“বঙ্গ-দর্শনের পূর্ববর্তী এবং তাহার পরবর্তী বঙ্গ-সাহিত্যের মধ্যে যে উচ্চনীচতা তাহা অপরিমিত। দার্জিলিং হইতে বাঁহারা কাঞ্চন জঙ্ঘার শিখরমালা দেখিয়াছেন তাঁহারা জানেন সেই অভ্রভেদী শৈল-সম্রাটের উদয়রবি সমুজ্জ্বল তুষার কিরীট চতুর্দিকের নিস্তব্ধ গিরি পারিষদবর্গের কত উদ্ধে সমুস্থিত হইয়াছে। বঙ্কিমচন্দ্রের পরবর্তী বঙ্গ-সাহিত্য সেইরূপ আকস্মিক অতুল্যতা লাভ করিয়াছে”—

রবীন্দ্রনাথ

Bankim began his literary career with the publication of a few poems in the columns of Iswar Chandra Gupta's *Pravakar*. But these juvenilia were far from promising. He then commenced to write an English novel *Rajmohan's*

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\* “যার কণ্ঠানিলে                      সাহিত্য-সলিলে  
একটি বৃন্দ একদিন উঠি  
অনন্ত তরঙ্গে                      আলোড়ি এ বঙ্গে  
সঞ্জীবন স্রোতে ঘাইতেছে ছুটি।”—বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র মিত্র

*Wife*, but it took him no long time to realise that no writer can ever make a mark in an alien

“যতদিন না সুশিক্ষিত জ্ঞানবন্ত বাঙ্গালীরা বাঙ্গালা ভাষায় আপন উক্তি সকল বিচ্যুত করিবেন. ততদিন বাঙ্গালীর উন্নতির কোন সম্ভাবনা নাই।”—

বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র ।

language, however great mastery may he possess over it. He shortly abandoned the project and consecrated all his energies for the embellishment of his mother-tongue. The immediate outcome of this was *Durges Nandini* (The Chieftain's Daughter)—written partly under the influence of Scott's *Ivanhoe*. This splendid work, interspersed with some fascinating landscape-delineations and fine though a bit imperfect character-sketches, at once came upon the public “like the dawning of a new sun in the skies.” It was a delightful open-sesame to a young novelist's dreams of romance and poetry. It was noticed in high terms of praise by Prof. Cowell in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1872. Closely followed the other brilliant novels and essays of the master, which slowly but surely created a current of ‘creative reading’, ‘creative thinking’ and ‘creative writing’ in our country.

Next to Michael Madhu Sudan Dutt, Bankim is perhaps the greatest creative force in our literature.

Bankim's foremost contribution to our language is his unrivalled literary style, which is neither too dignified like the old Sanskrit style nor too colloquial like the Alali style but an ideal harmony between the two. It is at once the cherished possession of the learned few as well as the heritage of the million. Aurobinda Ghosh, the distinguished poet-critic calls Bankim

"The sweetest voice that ever spoke in prose." Bankim is generally regarded as the greatest novelist in Bengali Literature. He is equally adept in weaving fine-spun dramas of life out of modern social themes and past historical events. His *Bisha Briksha* and *Krishnakanter Will* are realistic novels, powerfully exhibiting under different circumstances the disastrous consequences following from the moral degeneration of men due

"যে বিষবৃক্ষের বীজবপন হইতে ফলোৎপত্তি এবং ফলভোগ পর্যন্ত ব্যাখ্যানে আমরা প্রবৃত্ত হইয়াছি, তাহা সকলেরই গৃহ-প্রাঙ্গণেরোপিত আছে। রিপূর প্রাবল্য-ইহার বীজ; ঘটনাবীনে সকল ক্ষেত্রে উগ্ৰ হইয়া থাকে চিত্তসংঘর্ষের অভাবই ইহার অঙ্গুর, তাহাতেই এই বৃক্ষের বৃদ্ধি। এই বৃক্ষ মহাতেজস্বী, একবার ইহার পুষ্পি হইলে, আর নাশ নাই এবং ইহার

শোভা অতিশয় নয়ন প্রীতিকর ; দূর হইতে ইহার বিবিধ-  
 বর্ণ পল্লব ও সমুৎকুল মুকুলদাম দেখিতে অতি রমণীয় ।  
 কিন্তু ইহার ফল বিষময় ; যে খায় সেই মরে ।”—বিষকৃষ্ণ

to the loss of self-control at the glamour of feminine beauty. The tragedy that overcomes two noble souls Nagendra and Gobindalal who, though married to angelic wives, succumb to the superior physical charms of two young widows, points to the supreme necessity of self-control in individual and family life—

“Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control.

These three alone lead life to sovereign power.”

The extremely pathetic picture of Suryamukhi and Bhramar when they forfeit their husband's love will ever strike the tender chords of every feeling heart. There is a side attack in *Bisha Briksha* on the widow remarriage movement, inaugurated by Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. *Chandrasekhar*, a social novel with an historical setting, depicts the sad developments of an unwedded early love. The self-sacrifice of Pratap for the welfare of Saibalini invests the work with an epic grandeur. The picture of Dalani,

“তবে যাও প্রতাপ, অনন্তধামে । যাও, যেখানে ইন্দ্রিয়-  
জয়ে কষ্ট নাই, রূপে মোহ নাই, প্রণয়ে পাপ নাই, সেইখানে  
যাও । যেখানে রূপ অনন্ত, প্রণয় অনন্ত, সুখ অনন্ত,  
অখে অনন্ত পুণ্য সেইখানে যাও । যেখানে পরের হৃৎখ  
পরে জানে, পরের ধর্ম পরে রাখে, পরের জয় পরে গায় ।  
পরের জন্ত পরকে মরিতে হয় না, সেই মহৈশ্বর্যময় লোকে  
যাও ।”—চন্দ্রশেখর

heroine of the underplot of the fiction who Desdemona-like died a most guiltless death at the hands of her lord, has a touch of pathos which can only be felt but never described. *Kapalkundala*, an idealistic novel with an historical background, exhibits a bright and vivid contrast between the laws of Nature and the ways of Society, fatalism (প্রাক্তন) and human exertion. ‘The novel throughout moves steadily to its purpose. There is no over elaboration, no undue working after effect, everywhere there are signs of the work of an artist whose hand falters not as he chisels out his lines with classic grace. The force that moves the whole with emotion and gives to it its subtle spell is the mystic form of Eastern thought that clearly shows the new forms that lie ready for inspiring



a new school of fiction with fresh life. Outside the 'Marriage de Loti' there is nothing comparable to the *Kapatkundala* in the history of Western fiction." Bankim played the role of a nation-builder in *Sitaram*, *Debi Chandhurani* and *Ananda Math*, which set forth lofty religious truths, tinged with present-day nationalistic ideals and ambitions. *Ananda Math*, which is credited in some quarters to have inspired the revolutionaries of Modern India, contains a powerful exposition of new-born Indian nationalism. "Sacrifice—sacrifice your all for the emancipation of the Mother-land. Rest not, stop not till Mother India is free from foreign domination"

‘সহনা তাঁহাদিগের চক্ষে প্রাতঃ-সূর্য্যের রশ্মিরাশি  
প্রভাসিত হইল। চারিদিক্ হইতে মধুকণ্ঠে পক্ষিকুল  
গাহিয়া উঠিল। দেখিলেন, এক মন্দির নির্মিত প্রশস্ত  
মন্দিরের মধ্যে স্তূৰ্ণনির্মিতা দশভূজা প্রতিমা নবাবরণ  
কিরণে জ্যোতির্ময়ী হইয়া আসিতেছে। ব্রহ্মচারী প্রণাম  
করিয়া বলিলেন—এই মা যা হইবেন। দশভূজ দশদিকে  
প্রসারিত,—তাঁহাতে নানা আয়ুধরূপে নানা শক্তি  
শোভিত। পদতলে শক্রবিমর্দিত, পদাশ্রিত বীরকেশরী  
শক্রপীড়নে নিযুক্ত। দিগ্ভূজা, বলিতে বলিতে সত্যানন্দ  
গঙ্গদকণ্ঠে কাদিতে লাগিলেন—দিগ্ভূজা—নানা প্রহরণ-

ধারিণী শত্রুবিমর্দিনী বীরেন্দ্র পৃষ্ঠবিহারিণী দক্ষিণে লক্ষ্মী  
ভাগ্যরূপিনী বামে বাণী বিদ্যা-বিজ্ঞানদায়িনী সঙ্গে বলরূপী  
কার্ত্তিকেশ, বাবাসিদ্ধিরূপী গণেশ, এস আমরা মাকে  
উভয়ে প্রণাম করি। তখন দুই জনে যুক্ত করে এককণ্ঠে  
ডাকিতে লাগিল,

সর্বমঙ্গল-মঙ্গল্যে শিব সর্বার্থসাধিকে।

শরণ্যে ত্র্যম্বকে গৌরি নারায়ণি নমোহস্ত তে ॥

উভয়ে ভক্তিভাবে প্রণাম করিয়া গাত্রোথান করিলে  
মহেন্দ্র গদগদকণ্ঠে জিজ্ঞাসা করিলেন, মার এ মূর্ত্তি কবে  
দেখিতে পাইব? 'ব্রহ্মচারী বলিলেন, 'যবে মার সকল  
সন্তান মাকে মা বলিয়া ডাকিবে, সেইদিন উনি প্রণয়  
হইবেন।'—আনন্দমঠ

that is the one message that vibrates through every line and every character of the novel. Satyananda, Jibananda, Santi, Kalyani—all write that message in their heart blood. There is mention of secret societies in the work the like whereof was discovered in Bengal during the Partition days. *Rajsinha* the best Bengali historical novel, throws interesting light on the political kaleidoscope of India during the reign of Aurangzib. How the great Moghul Emperor, who was a born hater of the Hindus, suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of a Rajput prince

has been power fully delineated. Bankim's *Indira*, *Radharani* and *Juglanguriya* are fine romantic stories and his *Rajani* like *The Last Days of Pompeii* is an entertaining soul-study of a blind girl. Almost all the novels of the master have been rendered into English.

Bankim's novels stand on the border line of poetry and prose, fiction and the drama. So fascinating is their style that they occasionally read like fine poems and they have almost all of them been adapted to the stage to the endless delight of the play-going public.

#### SPECIMEN OF HIS PROSE.

“একপারে উদয়গিরি, অপরপারে বলিতগিরি, স্বচ্ছসলিলা কল্লোলিনী বিরূপা নদী নীল বারিরাশি লইয়া সমুদ্রাভিমুখেই চলিয়াছে। গিরিশিখর দ্বয়ে আরোহণ করিলে নিম্নে সহস্র সহস্র তালবৃক্ষ-শোভিত, ধাত্ত বা হরিৎক্ষেত্র চিত্রিত, পৃথ্বী অতিশয় মনোহারিনী দেখা যায়—শিশু যেমন মার কোলে উঠিলে মাকে সর্কাস্ত সুন্দরী দেখে, মহুষ্য পর্বতারোহণ করিয়া পৃথিবী দর্শন করিলে সেইরূপ দেখে।.....আমি বাহা দেখিয়াছি, তাহাই লিখিতেছি। সেই বলিতগিরি আমার চিরকাল মনে থাকিবে। চারিদিকে—যোজনের পর যোজন ব্যাপিয়া হরিদ্বর্ণ ধাত্তক্ষেত্রে মাতা বসুমতীর অঙ্গে বহু যোজন বিস্তৃত পীতাম্বরী শাট! তাহার উপর মাতার অলঙ্কার স্বরূপ, তাল বৃক্ষশ্রেণী সহস্র সহস্র তারপর সহস্র সহস্র তালবৃক্ষ সরল, সু-পত্র শোভাময়। মধ্যে নীল সলিলা, নীল-পীত পুষ্পময় হরিৎ-ক্ষেত্র মধ্য দিয়া বহিতেছে সু-কোমল গালিচার উপর কে নদী আঁকিয়া

দিয়াছে? তা যাক চারিপাশে মৃত মহাত্মাদের মহীয়সী কীর্তি পাথর এমন করিয়া যে পালিশ করিয়াছিল, সে কি এই আমাদের মত হিন্দু? এমন করিয়া বিনা বন্ধনে যে গাঁথিয়াছিল, সে কি আমাদের মত হিন্দু? আর এই প্রস্তর মূর্তিসকল যে খোদিয়াছিল—এই দিবা পুষ্পমালাভরণ ভূষিত বিকম্পিত চেলাঞ্চল প্রবৃদ্ধ সৌন্দর্য্য, সর্কান্ন-সুন্দর গঠন, পৌরুষের সহিত লাবণ্যের মূর্তিমান সান্মলন স্বরূপ পৌরুষমূর্তি যারা গড়িয়াছে, তাহারা কি হিন্দু? এই কোপপ্রেমগর্ভ সৌভাগ্যস্মৃতিতাদ্রা, চীনাধরা তরলিতরঙ্গহারা, পীরের ঘোবনভারাবনতদেহা—

তবী শ্রামা শিখরদশন পদ্মবিক্রাধরোষ্ঠী,

মধো ক্ষামা চকিতহরিণীপ্রেক্ষণা নিয়নাভি:—

এই সকল স্ত্রী-মূর্তি যারা গড়িয়াছে, তারা কি হিন্দু? তখন হিন্দুকে মনে পড়িল। তখন মনে পড়িল, উপনিষদ, গীতা, রামায়ণ, মহাভারত কুমারসম্ভব, শকুন্তলা, পাণিনি, কাত্যায়ণ, সাংখ্য, পাতঞ্জল, বেদান্ত, বৈশেষিক, এ সকলই হিন্দু কীর্তি এ পুতুল কোন্ ছার! তখন মনে করলাম হিন্দুকূলে জন্মগ্রহণ করিয়া সার্থক করিয়াছি।”—সীতারাম

Another feature of Bankim's novels demands a word of special notice. There is a touch of unrestrained volubility and over-working after effect in many famous European novels\*; but this

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\* “আধুনিক ইংরাজি নভেলে পদে পদে বিব্রেষণ—একটা সামান্ততম কার্যের সহিত তাহার দুরতম কারণ পরস্পর গাঁথিয়া দিয়া সেটাকে বৃহদাকার করিয়া তোলা হয় ব্যাপারটা হয় ত ছোট কিন্তু তাহার নথীটা বড় বিপর্দায়। আজকালকার নভেলিষ্টরা কিছুই বাদ দিতে চান না, তাহাদের কাছে সকলই গুরুতর। এইজন্ত উপস্থাসে সংসারের জ্ঞান ভয়ানক বাড়িয়া উঠিয়াছে। ইংরাজের কথা জানি না, কিন্তু আমাদের মত পাঠককে অত্যন্ত ক্লিষ্ট করে।”—রবীন্দ্রনাথ

drawback is conspicuous by its absence from the novels of Bankim. He writes in a most psychological, and at the same time, most suggestive way.

The towering personality of the master also breathes through his essays and other literary productions, *Kamala kantar daptar* (or The Diary of An Opium Eater) embodies Bankim's views on manifold problems of life and surpasses

“পুষ্প আপনার জন্ত ফুটে না। পরের জন্ত তো মার হৃদয়-  
কুহুমকে প্রফুটিত করিও। ..... প্রীতি সংসারে সর্ব-  
ব্যাপিনী। ঈশ্বরই প্রীতি। প্রীতিই আমার কর্ণে এখন-  
কার সংসার সঙ্গীত। অনন্তকাল সেই মহাসঙ্গীত মনুষ্য-  
হৃদয়-তন্ত্রীতে বাজিতে থাকুক। মনুষ্যজাতির উপর যদি  
আমার প্রীতি থাকে, তবে আমি অস্ত্র সূত্র চাহি না।”

কমলাকান্তের দপ্তর

De Quincey's *Confessions of An Opium Eater* in point of poetry, wit and freshness of outlook. *Krishna Charit* is a monument of original information and scholarship and is like *Ecce Homo* a bold literary attempt to discover the ideal man behind the legendary God. *Loka Rahashya* is a mine of refined humour, and Bankim's disserta-

“ঈশ্বরে ভক্তি, মনুষ্যে প্রীতি, এবং হৃদয়ে শান্তি, ইহাই  
ধর্ম ।”

“ঈশ্বরের সৃষ্টি অপেক্ষা কোন কবির সৃষ্টি সুন্দর ? বস্তুতঃ  
কবির সৃষ্টি, সেই সৃষ্টির অনুকারী বলিয়াই সুন্দর ।”

tions on historical, philosophical and critical topics bear the impress of a master-mind.

Bankim flourished when old order was changing yielding place to new and naturally the zeitgeist—spirit of conflict between the old ideals and the new—left its specific mark on almost all his writings. He represents the beautiful blend of Eastern Syntheticism and Western Analyticism, while preserving enbalméd within him the quintessence of his parental culture and native spiritualism. He exhorts his countrymen to learn

“যে দিন ইউরোপীয় বিজ্ঞান ও শিল্প এবং ভারতবর্ষের এই  
নিকাম ধর্ম একত্রিত হইবে, সেইদিন মনুষ্য দেবতা হইবে,  
তখন ঐ বিজ্ঞান ও শিল্পের নিকাম প্রয়োগ ভিন্ন সকাম  
হইবে না। তোমরা ভারতবাসী, তোমরা করিলেই  
হইবে। দুই-ই তোমাদের হাতে। এখন ইচ্ছা করিলে  
তোমরাই পৃথিবীর কর্তা ও নেতা হইতে পার। সে আশা  
যদি তোমাদের না থাকে তবে বুথায় আমি বকিয়া  
মরিতেছি ।”—বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র

Western Science with Eastern Metaphysics and work for the wellbeing of their country and the world at large.

Bankim's is a charmed name. He is generally known not only as the maker of the modern prose literature of Bengal but also as the high-priest of modern nationalism, which, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, has now overflowed every nook and corner of this vast peninsula. Long before the present race of singers and orators preached the cult of Indian nationalism, Bankim had sung the national anthem *Bande Mataram* and composed the national Bible *Ananda Math*, which years afterwards stirred the whole of India from corner to corner.

A literary critic concludes his appreciation of Bankim with the following suggestive remarks—

“Bankim's is a heaven-gifted genius. In his own field the novel, he has no equal even in English literature save that gifted woman George Eliot. But George Eliot has not that charm of style, that fascination of the pen which our Bankim has. She has, in fact, no style of her own. She is no master of literary finish. To Bankim belongs the unique honour of being the

“Bankim Chandra is in prose what Madhu Sudan is in verse—the founder of a new style, the exponent of a new idea. In creative imagination, in gorgeous description, in power to conceive and skill to describe, Madhu Sudan and Bankim stand apart from the other writers of the century: they are the first, the second is nowhere.”—

K. L. Dutt

“অম্বাশয় বড়ভাষা কেবল একর গাছের মত হয়ে গিয়েছিল, কেবল সহজ করে পদ্য সঙ্কলন করিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছিল; বাকম্ব পড়লে তাহাতে এক একটি কবিতার চেতনা জাগে তাহাৎ বাণীবায় পবিত্র করিয়া তুলিয়াছেন। পক্ষে মত যে কেবল কানীয়া গোমাতুর বাজিত আওয়াজ তাহা বিশ্বস্তায় কনাইবায় উপযুক্ত রূপে অঙ্গের কলাবতী বাগিনী আলাপ করিবার ভাণ্ডা হইয়া উঠিয়াছে।”

—রবীন্দ্রনাথ





founder of a high style and the high-priest of a literature. She stands far below. He is richer than Bankim in that wonderful collection of antic heraldry. But in interpreting the language of the heart, in revealing the mysteries of dark eternity, Bankim stands supremely high. There is not in him, however, the volcanic inspiration of Victor Hugo, the frenzied eye of that inspired seer. There is not in him the quick, far-reaching survey of Goethe, the prophetic pointing to the sore points of humanity. Let us take him for what he really is. He was a genius of of stupendous orbit. He belonged to those radiant serahs who come to reveal to us visions of eternal splendour."

The National Anthem.

Hail, Mother !

Sweet thy water, sweet thy fruits,  
Cool blows the scented south wind,  
Green waves thy corn,

Mother !

Land of the glad white moonlit nights,  
Land of trees with flowers in bloom,  
Land of smiles, land of voices sweet,  
Giver of joy, giver of desire,

Mother !

Seventy million voices resounding,  
Twice seventy million arms in resolve  
uplifting  
Dare any call Thee weak !

Obeisance to Thee ! O Thou, mighty with  
multiple might  
Redeemer Thou, Repeller of the  
enemy's host,  
Mother !

In Thee all knowledge, Religion Thou.  
Thou the heart. Thou the seat of life,  
The breath of life in the flesh !

O Mother, the strength of this arm thine  
Thou the devotion in the heart |

Thine the image consecrate  
From temple to temple !

The wielder of ten arms, Durga, Thou,  
Thou the Goddess of wealth bower'd  
                                in the lotus  
Thou the Muse dispensing wisdom,  
Obeisance to Thee !

Salutations to Thee, Holder of wealth,  
 Peerless,  
 With thy limpid water and luscious fruit,  
 Mother ! Hail, Mother !

Verdant, unsophisticated, sweet-smiling,  
 Radiant, holding, nourishing,  
 Mother !

Mother, Hail !”

Translated from the original

by W. H. Lee

Late of the Indian Civil Service

2. **Sanjib Chandra Chatterji**, elder brother of Bankim, was a writer of considerable merit;:

তাঁহার রচনা হইতে অনুভব করা যায় তাঁহার প্রতিভার অভাব ছিল না, কিন্তু সেই প্রতিভাকে তিনি প্রতিষ্ঠিত করিয়া যাইতে পারেন নাই।.....সঞ্জীব বালকের জন্ম সকল জিনিষ সঞ্জীব কোঁতুহলের সহিত দেখিতেন এবং প্রধান চিত্রকের জন্ম তাহার প্রধান অংশগুলি নির্বাচন করিয়া লইয়া তাঁহার চিত্রকে পরিস্ফুট করিয়া তুলিতেন এবং তাবুকের জন্ম সকলের মধ্যেই নিজের একটি স্বদ্ব্যংশ যোগ করিয়া দিতেন।”—বরীপ্রনাথ

but dissolatory, irregular and having no sustaining power, he failed to bequeath to literature anything of abiding value. Still his *Kanthamala* is a readable novel, his *Damini* a fascinating short story and his *Palamou*, an entertaining book of travel.

Sanjib was in the Editorial chair of the *Banga Darsan* for some time.

3. **Taraknath Ganguli's** *Swarnalata* is a life-like picture of the modern Hindu home. To study it is to observe the Hindu home as it actually is in its bright and tragic aspects. The central story of the novel turns upon an everyday domestic incident—separation between two brothers in a joint family, one earning and the other idle, at the instigation of the wife of the earning brother. The further history of the family has been narrated with singular fidelity to truth, and the novelist has incidentally drawn a very realistic picture of a Hindu spiritual preceptor whose concern for money is greater than his concern for his disciple. The sad story of Sarala and Syama brings home to the reader that the Hindu household is not an unmitigated

evil—it is manned by angels as well as devils. The terrible end of Pramada is a fine instance of 'poetic justice', and the picture of Gadadhar serves to relieve the tragic tension of the novel by nice comic touches. The amatory episode between Gopal and Swarnalata is perfectly natural and it is really refreshing to find Gopal happy in the married life after his tragic experiences in boyhood and the earlier part of youth. *Rameswarer Adrista*, another realistic novel of Taraknath, is a readable though not very popular work. The cause of widow remarriage has been advocated herein.

Taraknath's style is uniformly simple and well suited to his theme, and he nowhere makes a display of sentimentalism or sensationalism to tickle the fancy of his reader.

4. **Rmesh Chandra Dutt**, the distinguished scholar and novelist, saw the light in Calcutta in 1848. He came of the well-known Dutt family of Rambagan which gave birth to **Taru Dutt**, the female Chatterton. After a brilliant career at the Hare School and Presidency College he proceeded with two other (after-

wards reputed ) Indians\* to England and came out third in order of merit at the open competitive Civil Service Examination in 1869. He entered the Indian Civil Service in 1871 and gradually rose to a Divisional Commissionership, the highest office that was upto his time conferred upon an Indian. He retired from Government service in 1897 and was appointed in the year following as Lecturer in Indian History in the University of London. In 1904 the enlightened Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda showed an appreciation of his administrative abilities by appointing him as his minister of finance. The wisdom of this choice was amply manifest in the all round prosperity of the Baroda State that followed closely on its heels. He presided over the Indian National Congress held at Lucknow in 1900. He took to Bengali composition at the instance of the great **Bankim Chandra Chatterji**. He was the author of six Bengali novels and some English works on Indian History, Economics and Literature, which were highly appreciated on both sides of the water. He also compiled the

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\* Sir Surendranath Banerji and Mr. B. L. Gupta.

*Rig Veda* Sanhita in Bengali characters with a Bengali translation, the late Professor Max Muller giving his warmest support to the undertaking. He expired at Baroda in 1909. All shades and grades of people in India and prominent people in England—including Lord Morley and Lord MacDonnel—mourned his loss. The natural bias of Mr. Dutt's mind was for history. "Sir Walter Scott" wrote he in 1905 in the course of an article on literary topics "was my favourite author forty years ago. I do not know if Sir W. Scott gave me a taste for history or if my taste for history made me an admirer of Scott; but no subject, not even poetry, had such a hold upon me as history." No wonder Mr. Dutt's first novels were woven round historical figures and incidents *Banga Bijeta*, *Madhabi Kankan*, *Rajout Jiban Sandhya*, *Maharashtra Jiban Pravat*—all historical novels covering a period of a hundred years from the middle of the sixteenth century to the reign of Aurangzeb—were produced between 1874 and 1880. *Madhabi Kankan* shows with singular pathos the unhappy developments of an unwedded early love. It is an Indian *Enoch Arden* and has been englished by the author under the



head-line *Slave Girl of Agra*. The tragedy reaches its climax when Naren meets the woman he has loved all his life and through her persuasion uproots from the depth of his soul his vain longings for her who has become another man's wife. *Rajput Jiban Sandhya* weaves the story of the heroic struggle of Rana Pratap for recovering the freedom of his beloved principality against the overwhelming might of the Moghul Empire and *Maharashtra Jiban Pravat* depicts the rise of the Mahratta power under Sivaji, the great Hindu warrior-diplomat. "Probably more history has been learned from Scott's historical novels than from the old type of matter-of-fact text-books, and we believe many will be tempted to gain a better idea of Indian history in this country by Mr. Dutt's romances than by Blue-books or Parliamentary oratory." (*Western Morning News*). These works will occupy a permanent place in the fiction-literature of the country and infuse fresh life into our national struggle for freedom. In 1885 appeared Mr. Dutt's *Sansar* and in 1883 its sequel *Samaj*. The two together present a charming picture of the everyday life of present-day Bengal. "The warm domesticities of fresh love-interests of the

tale hold the interest of the reader by their absolute sincerity and their delightful fidelity to nature. The life of the farm, of the College, of the temple, of the city, the struggle of the old with the new in social and religious habits, the aspirations and speculations of the Hindu are interpreted with unfaltering accuracy and whole-hearted sympathy.

The love-story of Sarat, the College student and Sudha the little widow, is delicately sketched, and the reconciliation of the Hindu Squire with his betrayed wife is a piece of work that the practised Western novelist might well envy" (*Glasgow Herald*). The chief interest of these stories, however, centres not so much in character-delineation as in the under-current of social and intellectual forces, which are slowly moulding the habits and thoughts of young Bengal. *Sansar* was engulished by the author under the nomenclature—*The Lake of Palms*.

As a literary artist, **Rames Chandra's** difference with Bankim consists in this. Banhim like Shakespeare has his access to the deepest recesses of the human heart and feels deeply and

writes emotionally like an inspired poet. **Rames Chandra**, on the other hand, has his access only to the simple feelings and emotions of the heart and excels in portraying simple, homely pictures of simple men and women. Bankim's canvas is broader and his imagination richer than his compeer's.

5. **Pandit Sivanath Sastri**, (1847-1919) has described the manifold transformations in the Hindu Society after the influx of Western ideas in some social novels—*Meja Bau*, *Jugantar Nyantra*, *Bidhabar Chele*. Predominantly ethical in tone, these works occasionally betray the reformer within the writer and contain a curious combination of fact and fiction. *Meja Bau* is the most widely read of these works. The cause of widow-remarriage has been advocated in *Bidhabar Chele*.

Sivanath's **Life of Ramtanu Lahiri** is a valuable record of the contemporary history of Bengal, social and educational, and some of his religious and patriotic poems are really beautiful.

6. The novels of **Sailesh Chandra Majumdar**, Editor of the *Banga Darsan* for some time,

present a queer combination of the real and the grotesque. *Fulajani* is his only work, which is considerably free from grotesqueness, and which contains some charming pictures of rural life, thoroughly realistic in tone and tint.

7. **Swarnakumari Debi**, elder sister of Rabindranath, is the first lady-writer of stories in our language. These stories throw some interesting side-light on some aspects of our modern social life. Her pen-picture of *Huglir Imambari* is replete with a good deal of historical and biographical interest. She has also composed many songs and lyrics.

8. **Pandit Sures Chandra Samajpati's Saji** is, if not the first, one of the first books of short stories in our language. Some of these stories are really charming.

9. The short stories of **Pravat Kumar Mukherji** are eminently entertaining. Their perusal will produce a smile on the lip and a glitter on the brow of even the most fastidious Puritan. They are so full of wit and humour and couched in such a haunting, bewitching style! *Sorosi* and *Desi o Bilati* will ever make the writer favourite with the young. Some of his stories

echo the patriotic feeling which swept over Bengal during the *Swadeshi Days*. His novels are not so popular as his volumes of storiettes.

10. **Jatindramohon Singha's** *Dhrubatarā* is a realistic picture of the loves and lives of an advanced section of the Hindu community. The ingenuous writer has very beautifully preserved intact the rightful sense of proportion and 'dramatic justice'—a principle which is often violated by many fiction-writers of the day. *Urisyar Chitra*, another novel of the author, gives a delicate sketch of the social and domestic life of the Oriya people. Such pen-portraits of new peoples in our language would be highly welcome.

11. **Sarat Chandra Chatterji** is the most outstanding figure among the fiction-writers of the day. He is a novelist of Rabindranath's school,\* dealing with the present-day social problems, and his distinctive individuality as a writer consists in finely

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\* It is said that he took to fiction-writing after going through the novels of Rabindranath—specially *Gora*—time and again.

bringing out the bright and shady points in the character of a man, however good or bad he may be. Some novelists there are who paint either angels or devils when depicting good or bad men, but that is not the way with Saratchandra.

Saratchendra bears some resemblance with Dickens. Like Dickens, he has had no remarkable academic training. Like Dickens, he has peopled his creations with low-class despised people ; and like Dickens, he has occasionally evinced appreciable skill in the art of story-manipulation.

One of the earliest stories of Saratchandra—*Bindur Chhele*—delineating an aunt's affection for a little nephew indicated the advent of a powerful writer. It was so touching and so beautifully told ! His later stories—*Ramer Sumati*, *Fandit Mahashaya*, *Palli Samaj Biraj Bau*, *Datta*, *Chandranath*, *Debadas*.....went on enhancing his reputation and their readers count to-day not by hundreds but by thousands. So fascinating are their style and sentiments ! They delineate some faithful pictures of the social and domestic life of present-day Bengal. The "Times" of London recently noticed some of

these stories in the English translation in highly eulogistic terms.

In *Charitrahin*, which is regarded as a masterpiece by a section of the reading public but which is considered as a piece of obscene literature by a volume of respectable opinion, three distinct and well defined types of Indian womanhood have been delineated by Saratchandra. The best, purest and holiest type—the ancient ideal type—is represented by Surabala wife of Upen, who is all sweetness and goodness, all purity and chastity, who regards her husband not as a mere man but as a divinity and who has unfaltering, unquestioning faith in the time-honoured traditions and cultural ideals of her race. The radically opposite type is represented by Kiranmayi, the godless loud-tongued *sabjanta* lady, who is not loyal to her lord, who has no faith in the wisdom of the Shastric injunctions and who indulges in all sorts of plain irreverent talks—relevant, irrelevant and not strictly confined to the bounds of decency—to justify her wicked deeds.\* Surabala looks upon the Shastras

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\* Some of her observations are violent tirades against the stronghold of orthodoxy. They represent the views of the novelist himself,

with the eye of unquestioning faith—faith mixed with reverence, Kiranmayi, with the eye of irreverent reason. The third type of Indian womanhood is represented by Sabitri, who, though a fallen woman (fallen for causes for which she was not much to blame), has many lovable traits of character—who in her fallen state is a better species of humanity than Kiranmayi, even when living with her husband. There are fallen women and fallen women—those who live with their husbands are not all angels and those who are commonly despised as fallen women may have among them some good souls deserving a better treatment at the hands of society—that seems to be the underlying implication of the novelist. Not having any personal knowledge of fallen women, we do not know whether there is any real Sabitri among them or not, but this much cannot perhaps be denied that many fine souls would not have lived in shame to-day, had there been any provision for the re-marriage of girl-widows in the country. The girl-widow, who is subjected to all sorts of enticements when she is too young to judge for herself, has presented a perplexing problem even to the writers of the orthodox



school—to novelists like **Bankim Chandra Chatterji** and **Nirupama Debi**.

Pictures of free love—revolting of course to orthodox Hindu instincts—have been delineated in *Srikanta*. Srikanta accepts the love of a fallen woman, who possesses some lovable qualities, and agrees to treat her as his wife without undergoing any religious ceremony or legal formality. Abhaya openly rebels against a husband who does not do his duty towards her and hies to live with a young man who loves her and whom she loves. She plainly tells Srikanta that she does not consider herself bound to a man who maltreats her and she does not admit that the marriage-vows are binding on the better half only while the other half grossly disregards them. The problem is certainly serious deserving careful consideration, but it would be an evil day for the Hindus as a race, if their age-old ideal of wedlock were to be replaced by any mercenary form of love—love unfettered by any

abiding social or religious obligation.\* The gospel of free love has not proved a blessing in in the West—Western novels bear a striking testimony thereto—and it will not prove a panacea for all evils in the East. Moreover, stray instances of unhappy couples do not justify a change in a noble ideal practised by millions for generations and generations. Such instances there are and there will be in every society, Eastern and Western, in all times.

In *Grihadaha*, which bothers by its tiresome length, a fairly educated Brahmo girl lives in open shame with her husband's friend, a well-to-do young man of boisterous and uncertain emotions, though her husband is a noble character. The story of her struggles before her final defeat is interesting, but a picture like this has

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\* Many Indian households afford examples of the married state in its highest degree of perfection. This may be due to the teachings of the Shastras, and to the strict injunctions which they inculcate with regard to marital obligations ; but it is no exaggeration to say that husbands are generally devotedly attached to their wives, and in many instances the latter have the most exalted conception of their duties towards their husbands."—

been delineated with greater felicity by Rabin-dranath in *Ghare Baire*.

A cry is raised from time to time in the country that these novels are undermining the morals in young Bengal. This is a very serious charge against a novelist. Saratchandra's reply to this charge is, "I have no sympathy for vice—no novelist can have any. I have thoroughly studied the ways of society and drawn the attention of the public to some grave social problems, which require a satisfactory solution." The reply is unexceptionable, though it is not unlikely that a section of young folk of both sexes might be led astray by misunderstanding the real significance of the novels, which are more problematical than realistic in tone and temper.

12. **Nirupama Debi and Anurupa Debi** are two powerful lady novelists of the day. In point of refinement and culture, they are inferior to no living Bengali writer with the exception of Rabin-dranath. *Didi* and *Annapurnar Mandir* are the finest trophies of Nirupama Debi. *Didi* exhibits the triumph of the old, old idea that "Devotion to her lord is woman's honour, it is her eternal Heaven" (*Mahabharata*)—

“ God is thy Law ; thou mine ; to know no  
 more  
 Is woman’s happiest knowledge and her  
 praise.”

(Eve to Adam in *Paradise Lost*.)

The re-union of Surama and Amar after a long separation due to an unavoidable fault of the latter is as touching as significant. The first novels of **Anurupa Debi** like *Jyotihara* and *Poshyaputra* are marked by an excess of sentimentalism from which her later works are refreshingly free. *Mantra Sakti* and *Ma* are her crowning works. The sanctity and the potency of marriage-vows have been beautifully established in the relations of Bani and Ambar in *Mantra Sakti*. *Ma* holds up a touching picture of the re-union of a son with his father and step-mother after a series of tragic experiences. A well-developed plot, clever analysis of the emotions of the heart and a stream of wholesome ideas are the salient features of the novel.

Bengal is proud of these sister novelists ! They are specially adept in unfolding the delicate shades of thought and feeling which make up the inner being of women-folk.

13. A passing reference is due to some old writers of fiction—**Haran Chandra Rakshit**, **Damodar Mukerji**, **Jaladhar Sen** and others. Some of these writers have a wide reading public, though as literary artists, they are far from remarkable.

Of the young story-tellers of the day (whose number is daily multiplying like mulberry leaves) few with one or two solitary exceptions have exhibited consummate skill in story-manipulation. Most of these writers are aspirants after cheap fame and do not possess the story-teller's gifts of keen observation and lively narration. The sooner this inordinate craze for obnoxious story-telling disappears from the country, the better.

## C. MISCELLANEOUS WRITERS

### (a) General Essays

1. **Kaliprasanna Ghosh** (1844-1911) of East Bengal is a considerable literary figure. Descended from a respectable Kayastha family of Varakar in Vikrampur, he was not a University man in the general sense of the term; but he acquired by dint of private studies a thorough command over a wide range of subjects, specially literature and

philosophy, both Eastern, and Western. He served for many years as Dewan of the Bhowal Estate and wrote *Pravat Chinta*, *Nisitha Chinta*, *Nivrita Chinta*, *Bhaktir Jay* etc., mostly books of thoughtful essays.

Kaliprasanna is the master of a magnificent style and is often compared with Carlyle and Emerson as an essay-writer, though that remark is applicable only so far as literary penmanship and not so far as freshness of outlook is concerned. Kaliprasanna like Carlyle and Emerson gave no new message to the world. Still those who will go through his essays on *Nadir Jal*, *Nirab Kaji*, *Aviman*, *Asrujal*, *Amrita* and *Lokaranya* will freely admit that he is an eminently stimulating writer.

Kaliprasanna's journalistic venture--the *Ban-dhab*--though short-lived, was a success. Bankim retired from the editorial chair of the *Banga Darsan* with the following significant remark--"The *Bandhab* will accomplish what the *Banga Darsan* has failed to do.'"

A book on spirits appeared from the pen of Kaliprasanna towards the close of his life. He

sincerely believed in the existence of the spirit world.

2. A brilliant scholar of Calcutta University, **Chandra Nath Basu** (1845–1910) was a writer of considerable merit. His unfolding of the inner significance of Kalidas's *Sakuntala* and the Savitri episode of the *Mahabharata* reveals a fine critical acumen, and his *Tridhara* contains some thoughtful philosophical essays. The habit of "attitudinizing or effusive sentimentality" occasionally vitiates his mode of writing.

3. **Akshay Chandra Sarkar** (1846–1917), Editor of the *Nabajiban*, the *Prachar* and the *Sadharani*, was a luminous writer. His literary essay *Chandralok*, published in Bankim's *Kamalakanter Daptar*, is throughout characterised by a rich vein of poetry, and his appreciation of Hem-chandra and poem on *Gocharaner Math* reflect credit upon his critical and imaginative faculties.

4. **Indranath Banerji** (1849–1911) contributed many lively papers to the vernacular weekly *Bangabasi* under the pen-name of 'Panchananda' and produced a fine satiric poem—*Bharater Uddhar* (The Liberation of India)—casting a fling at those Bengali youths whose patriotism

consists in “sound and fury, signifying nothing”—in making exciting speeches and building castles in the air.

5. **Kaliprasanna Sinha** (1861–1890) has made a notable contribution to our literature of social satire in the shape of *Hutum Penchar Naksa* and rendered in chaste, vigorous and well-expressed Bengali a faithful translation of Vyas’s immortal epic. The latter work removed a long-felt desideratum in our language.

6. **Chandrasekhar Mukherji’s** prose-rhapsody *Udbhranta Prem* (Distracted Love), written upon the loss of his first wife, “would fill a remarkable place in the full sense of the term in the history of any literature, Western or Eastern.” The magic of the work lies in its “emotional transfiguration.” “This latter is truly thaumaturgic, a revelation of original creative power; it is as if ‘a new planet swims into our ken.’ The passion of the rhapsody thrills, startles and electrifies. It is a contribution to the consecrated moods and abiding emotions that purely human or social in origin, are fast taking the place of religious feelings in lifting us up to the Absolute and the Infinite, and making us



transcend the limitations of finite existence. Disenchanted love is not certainly new, it may be even said with truth that it is the fate of all love to be disenchanted one way or other, but here the boundless egoism of subjective desire and the universal hallucination begotten of it, produce a sort of clairvoyance, as it were, to which the entire panorama of nature and mind, of life and society, secretly unfolds itself." (Dr. Seal's *New Essays in Criticism*.)

7. The *Valmikir Jay* (or The Three Forces, Physical, Intellectual and Moral) of Pandit Haraprasad Sastri, is a splendid work. "Goethe's *Helena* with its weird uncertain movement, mingling the antique with the medieval, the classical with the romantic displays a fine insight, but it pales before the *Valmikir Jay* not only in moral profundity, but also in grandeur of design, a sense of primitive elemental freedom and an intoxication of the creative imagination. De Quincey's Dream-fuge, strangely mingling the sepulchral passion of deliverance from sudden death with the jubilant salvation of Christendom from that apocalyptic dragon, the first Napoleon, and symbolically with the Resurrection of Christ,

strains after a profound significance, but it pales before the *Valmiki Jay* in internal and organic connectedness, if not in the weird sublimity of the phantom-like procession. Richter's *Dream of the Dead Christ* is morally profound, and grotesquely imaginative, but pales before the *Valmiki Jay* in magnitude and breadth of canvas and dramatic intensity of life and passion." (Dr. Seal's *New Essays in Criticism*.)

8. Some of the literary essays of **Balendranath Tagore** (1870—1899), who was cut off in the flower of youth, are well worth perusal. He was a very promising writer.

9. The late lamented **Panchcowri Banerji** was an well-informed literary man and occasionally treated the periodical-reading public with thoughtful discourses on literature, religion and nationalism.

10. **Bepin Chandra Pal**, **Pramatha Chaudhuri**, **Benoy Kumar Sarkar** and **Bepin Behari Gupta** are some of the luminous writers of the day. **Bepin Chandra** has achieved considerable distinction through his dissertations on nationality, religion and theology and **Pramatha**

**Chaudhari's** name has, of late, been associated with that of the 'Birbali style' he has ushered in—a style that is thoroughly colloquial in tone and temper and is highly malleable and powerful too. **Benoy Kumar Sarkar** has produced some stimulating works of which one—*Bartaman Jagat* in several volumes—contains a good deal of first hand information on all momentous world movements, social, religious, literary, political, industrial or otherwise. **Bepin Behari Gupta** has contributed two lively "Table-Talks" to our language—*Puratan Prasanga* and *Sahitya Prasanga*—embodying the views of some well-informed scholars on important topics. **Maharaj Jagadindranath Roy** of Nator is the master of a graceful literary style. His presidential address at the Pabna literary conference\* was a creditable performance and his *Nurjahan* is a charming historical romance.

### (b) Biography and Criticism.

The critical literature of Bengal has not yet passed the days of leading strings. There are in the English language lots of good critical and biographical works in Englishmen of Letters, Great

Writers, Cambridge Manuals, Every Man's Library, Poetry and Life and other series. But there is nothing of the kind in the Bengali language.

Of the small number of our biographical works, the masterly critical and biographical sketch of **Madhusudan Dutt** by **Jogindranath Basu** is out of the way the best. Next follow the biography of **Ram Mohan Roy** by **Nagendranath Chatterji**, the Life of **Iswarchandra Vidyasgar** by **Chandi Charan Banerji**, the life-sketch of **Debendranath Tagore** by **Ajit Kumar Chakravarty** and *Kantakabi Rojanikanta* by **Naliniranjan Pandit**. There are other minor biographical works also in Bengali.

Of the purely critical works in our language, **Rabindranath's** eminently illuminating survey of our ancient classical and modern Bengali literature, **Girija Prasanna Roy Chaudhuri's**, **Purnachandra Basu's** and **Lalit Kumar Banerji's** charming appreciations of **Bankim chandra** and **Ajit Kumar Chakravarti's** sketch-work on **Rabindranath** deserve a passing notice.

Steps should be taken to start a Bengali Men of Letters Series under the editorship of a distinguished scholar—**Hara Prasad Sastri**, **Dines**

**Chandra Sen** or **Lalit Kumar Banerji**—so that this important branch of our literature may not long remain neglected.

(c) **Religion.**

“Religion is the highest plane of human thought and life.”—Vivekananda.

The religious discourses of **Rammohan Roy**, **Keshab Chandra Sen** and **Debendra-nath Tagore** created, at one time, a stir in the country. **Ramkrishna Paramahansa** who poured out his soul in “a rhapsody of spiritual utterances”, made observations of singular wisdom, embodied in that well-known work—*Ramkrishna Kathamrita*, which “throws a flood of marvellous light upon the obscurest passages of the Puranic Shastras and brings out the fundamental principles of the popular Hindu faith with a philosophical clearness” that is at once the envy and despair of erudite scholars. **Swami Vivekananda**, the disciple of **Ramkrishna**, the hero of the Chicago Parliament, the prophet of the New Age in India was the first to dream those dreams and propagate those ideals in his writings and speeches which agitate the public mind of India to-day. His motto was manliness, his watchword

### বিতৰ্ক-বাণী

“আমি চাই এমন লোক—বাহাদের শরীরের পেশীসমূহ লৌহের তায় দৃঢ় ও স্নায়ু ইন্দ্রিয়-নির্মিত হইবে; আর তাহাদের শরীরের ভিতর এমন একটি মন বাস করিবে, বাহা বজ্রের উপাদানে গঠিত। বীৰ্য্য, মনুষ্যত্ব, ক্ষত্রবীৰ্য্য—ব্রহ্মতেজ।”

“ত্যাগ ও সেবাই ভারতের জাতীয় আদর্শ—এই দুইটি বিষয়ে উন্নত করুন, তাহা হইলেই অবশিষ্ট যত কিছু আপনা আপনি উন্নত হইবে।”

“উদীয়মান যুবকসম্প্রদায়ের উপরে আমার বিশ্বাস। তাহাদের ভিতর হইতে আমি কল্পী পাইব। তাহারাই সিংহের তায় বিক্রমে দেশের স্বার্থ উন্নীত করিবে।”

“আমি পুরুষগণকে বাহা বলিয়া থাকি, রমণীগণকে ঠিক তাহাই বলিব। ভারত ও ভারতীয় ধর্মে বিশ্বাস এবং শ্রদ্ধা স্থাপন কর, তেজস্বিনী হও, আশায় বুক বাঁধ, ভারতে জন্ম বলিয়া লজ্জিতা না হইয়া উহাতে গৌরব অনুভব কর, আর স্মরণ রাখিও, আমাদের অপরাপর জাতির নিকট হইতে অনেক কিছু লঃতে হইবে বটে, কিন্তু জগতের অগ্রাগ্র জাতি অপেক্ষা আমাদের সহস্রগুণে অপরকে দিবার আছে।”

“হে বীর, সাহস অবলম্বন কর, সদর্পে বল—আমি ভারতবাসী, ভারতবাসী আমার ভাই, বল মূর্খ ভারতবাসী, দরিদ্র ভারতবাসী, ব্রাহ্মণ ভারতবাসী, চণ্ডাল ভারতবাসী আমার ভাই...বল ভাই, ভারতের মৃত্তিকা আমার স্বর্গ, ভারতের কল্যাণ আমার কল্যাণ, আর বল দিনরাত, ‘হে গৌরী, হে জগদম্বে, আমায় মনুষ্যত্ব দাও; মা আমার দুর্বলতা, কাপুরুষতা দূর কর, আমায় মানুষ্য কর।’”

freedom, his ideal service of God through service of Man, and he was in modern times the first to exhort his so-called high-caste co-religionists to get rid of the curse of untouchability. Young India is more or less his creation. His religious writings are a source of burning inspiration. The masterly exposition of Neo-Vaishnavism by **Sisir Kumar Ghosh**, the Doyen of the Indian Press—specially his splendid life-sketch of the Saint of Nadia will be ever read with avidity by all religiously inclined persons—specially in the Vaishnava world. The religious discourses of **Aswinikumar Dutt** and **Aurobindo Ghosh** deserve the perusal of every young man. All these works deal with Hinduism and there are lots of other readable works on Hinduism in our language. But Hinduism is not the only religion on earth. Our suggestion consequently is that a Religious Classics Series should be started so that a sound exposition of every religious system of the world may not be wanting in our language.

(d) **Philosophy.**

“O philosophy thou guide of life and discoverer  
of virtue. —Cicero

The philosophical lectures of **Chandrakanta Tarkalankar**—published in book-form—command a genuine admiration for his profound scholarship. The metaphysical musings of **Dwizendranath Tagore**—the saint-recluse of Santiniketan and author of *Swapna Prayan*, a vast allegorico-philosophical poem—embrace a wide field of thought Eastern and Western and startle the reader by their arresting originality. **Hirendranath Dutt's** *Gitay Iswarbad* is a standing testimony to his vast erudition and scholarship. The philosophical writings of **Kokileswar Bhattacharya**, **Sitanath Tatwabhusan**, **Pramathanath Tarkalankar**, **Bidhusekhar Sastri** and **Durgacharan Sankhya-Vedantatirtha** repay perusal. But all these works are written mainly about Hindu philosophy and no writer but one—**Charuchadra Sinha** author of *Mono Bijnan* (Psychology) has written any book on any system of European philosophy.\* This desideratum in our language can be removed if some well-read student of Eastern and Western philosophy give the matter their serious consideration. We like to see a Philosophical Classics Series started under the editor-

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\* Mention is also due to a handbook of Logic in Bengali, by **Prakashchandra Sinha**.



ship of **Hirendra Nath Dutt**, Ex-President of Bengal Academy of Literature, so that popular expositions of different philosophical systems of East and West may enrich our literature.

(e) Science

Science echoes the living voice of God. The scientific literature of every progressive nation is now very rich. But unfortunately no branch of our literature has so long been more thoroughly neglected. **Sir J. C. Bose**, **Sir P. C. Roy** and some of their pupils have no doubt won world-wide reputation by publishing their scientific researches, but the lamentable fact cannot be overlooked that there is no good book on Physics, Chemistry, Botany and other sciences in our language. **Sir P. C. Roy** of all Bengalis, who is a distinguished savant and efficient organiser and has a large number of brilliant young scholars associated with him, can easily make up this drawback by starting a Bengali Scientific Classics series. He of all men need not be told that standard works on different sciences are as much a necessity for the progress of a nation as original scientific researches.

It is a matter of great hope that **Sir J. C. Bose**

has made some of his researches accessible to the Bengali-reading public. **Sir P. C. Roy's** volume on Zoology is now well nigh forgotten. He is also the author of a volume of Bengali scientific terminology. Principal **G. C. Basu's** book on Botany is admirably adapted for our school going folk. The scientific discourses of **Ramendra-sundar Tribedi**, combining the best fruits of science and philosophy, reflect credit on his scholarship. Some of these dissertations were done into German by the late Nikhilnath Maïtra and were spoken highly of by eminent Western scientists. **Dr. Panchanan Neogy** has written an interesting biography of some world-renowned scientists of East and West and one or two other works on science in Bengali. Mention is also due to Swami Vijnananda's *Surya Siddhanta* and some learned scientific discourses of **Jogeschandra Roy** and **Apurbachandra Dutt**. **Jagadananda Roy** of Santiniketan has popularised some abstruse sciences for juvenile readers.

### (f) History

Scant heed has yet been paid to history by our writers. Not to speak of the authentic annals of

other lands, there is a not good systematic history of even Bengal in our language. \*

Raja Rajendralal Mitra's Indological researches and Bankimchandra's papers on the origin of the Bengali race might be regarded as the beginnings of real historical studies in this presidency. The historical labours of William Hunter and other foreign writers should not also be overlooked. Mahamahopadhyaya Hara Prasad Sastri and Nagendranath Basu, Prachyavidyarnava have toiled hard in the field of Indian antiquities and arrived at important conclusions. Akshaykumar Maitra, founder of the Varendra Research Society, has brought to light many historical heresies in his *Sirajuddaula* and thrown fresh light on an obscure period of Indian history in his *Gaura Lekhamala*. Ramaprasad Chanda's *Gaura Rajamala* has received European recognition. Rajanikanta Gupta's *History of Sepoy Mutiny*, Nikhilnath Roy's *History of Mursidabad*, Jogindranath Samaddar's *Contemporary India*, Kaliprasanna Banerji's *Nababi Amal* and

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\* It is highly refreshing to find that **Rakhaldas Banerji** has recently made a laudable move in this direction.

**Rakhaldas Banerji's** *Prachin Mudra* and *History of Bengal* are all well-informed books.

Efforts should be made to start a Historical Classics Series under the editorship of a distinguished scholar like Prof. **Jadunath Sarkar** (whose *History of Aurangzeb* and *History of Sivaji* have already put him in the fore-front of Indian historians) so that a good reliable history of every country may be written in our language. "History," in Carlyle's words, "is the true poetry" — "is an imprisoned epic, nay, an imprisoned psalm and prophecy."

#### (g) Works of Translation.

This department of our literature has all along been neglected. In every high-class literature of the west, specially German, French and English, lots of beautiful works of foreign writers are annually translated by a band of distinguished scholars. Can't the same arrangement be made in our literature? We like to see an organisation started under the direct guidance of a well-read student of foreign literatures like **Jyotirindranath Tagore**, \* **Pramatha Chaudhuri** or **Suniti-**

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\* The distinguished literateur passed away in his Ranchi residence after the above had been written.

**kumer Chatterji** for the translation of the masterpieces of foreign literatures. This will go a great way to enhance the stock of our national lore and improve our tastes and tendencies, arts and ideals.

**Jyotirindranath Tagore** has acquainted the Bengali reading public with many masterpieces of Sanskrit and European literatures through his elegant translations. **Haranchandra Rakshit** has tried to give his countrymen some impression of "the wood notes wild" of "the sweet swan of Avon" in his mother-tongue.

**Chandicharan** en's translation of **Mr. Stowe's** "Uncle Tom's Cabin," **Benoykumar Sarkar's** translation of **Booker Washington's** Autobiography and **Rajanikanta Guha's** rendering of some Greek works are all creditable performances. Some works of **Scott**, **George Eliot**, **Victor Hugo**, **Moliere**, **Ibsen**, **Tolstoi**, **Maupessant**, **Omar Khayyam** and other foreign writers have also been translated of late into our language. Much more, however, remains to be done in this direction. The more the balmy, bracing breeze of world-literature blows in our language, the better.

(h) History of Literature and Philology—  
**Dr. Dineschandra Sen's** *Bangabhasa-o-Sahitya* is the first systematic and accurate treatise on the subject, shewing a distinct improvement in this respect over its predecessor, the late **Pandit Ramgati Nyayaratna's** volume. It is based chiefly on researches made all over Eastern Bengal, with the object of discovering the numerous old manuscripts which long lay hid in the abodes of poor country folk, and whose existence was not previously suspected. Many hundreds of volumes of manuscripts, quite unknown to the educated public before, have been brought to light, classified, arranged and criticised herein with a delicacy, a refinement, a directness which relieves and vivifies the minutiae of details. It gives the History of the Bengali Language and Literature from the earliest times down to 1858 A. D. The history of modern Bengali literature (from the time of **Iswarchandra Gupta** down to the present day) is yet to be written.

The same remark applies to the science of Bengali philology. **Ramendrasundar Trivedi, Rabindranath Tagore, Jogeschandra Roy,**

**Lalitkumar Banerji** and **Sunitikumer Chatterji** have contributed some illuminating papers and **Bijoychandra Majumdar** has written an authoritative work in English on the subject, which will be of immense use to our future philological writers. **Hemantakumer Sarkar's** recent sketch work on philology will serve the purpose of a well-informed introductory study.

(i) **Grammar and Lexicon.**

There is no good book on Bengali grammar. **Prasannachandra Vidyaratna's Sahitya Prabes** is vitiated by his over much leaning to Sanskrit. **Jogeschandra Roy** has brought to bear on the subject the fruits of up-to-date philological and linguistic investigations. His work is perhaps the first genuine attempt to handle a knotty theme from the correct standpoint.

To **Nagendranath Basu Prachya** **vidyaranava** belongs the credit of compiling the *Encyclopaedia Indica* the task whereof was at first undertaken by **Rangalal Mukherji**. A store-house of valuable information on an infinite variety of subjects, his *Biswakosha* in numerous volumes, is a monumental achievement, removing a long-felt desideratum in our language.

**Jogeshchandra Roy's** *Sabdakosh* bears the stamp of his many-sided scholarship. **Jnanendra Mohan Das's** vocabulary is compiled in the light of up-to-date philological findings. **Saratchandra Sastri** and **Subalchandra Mitra** have imparted a novel charm to their vocabularies by incorporating short biographical sketches of many eminent men into them.

### (j) **Art-Criticism.**

The art of a country shows the beauty of its soul. We have some good artists, but there is a paucity of works on the philosophy of art in our language. **Dr. Abanindranath Tagore** has a European reputation as a pictorial artist and has written several booklets on pictorial art one of which has been rendered into French. These works, though engaging in their way, far from satisfy our needs. A **Ruskin** is yet to arise in our language and light the **Seven Lamps of Architecture and Painting**.

### (k) **Economics and Politics.**

There are no good books in Bengali on these subjects. **Sakharam Ganes Deuskar's** *Deser Katha* contained a mass of useful information on



**Indian Economics.** But the book has long since been proscribed by Government. **Jogindranath Samaddar's** little brochures *Arthaniti* and *Arthashastra*, **Swami Prajnananda Saraswati's** recent works on politics are lucid out-line expositions of different political and economic theories of East and West. Political prisoners are now flooding the country with thrilling accounts of their adventures and agonies, but these hardly fall within the purview of politics. The attention of our political thinkers is drawn to this neglected branch of our literature.

#### (i) Other Departments.

**Sasadhar Roy** and **Bijay chandra Majumdar** occasionally contribute lively papers on Sociology. **Prasannakumer Sarvadhikary** was the first to write in his mother-tongue treatises on Algebra and Arithmetic. On Geology, Zoology, Minerology, Botany, Geography and Higher Mathematics, we have no remarkable works. On Hygiene and Medicine some books are available, but they far from satisfy the needs.

#### (m) Child literature.

“The child is father of the Man.” The more is the child literature of a country deve-

loped, the better. The tiny little folk of Bengal are fortunate in having as contributors to their literature some good writers—**Jogindranath Sackar**, **Dakshina charan Mitra**, **Rajendralal Acharya**, **Upendra kishore Roy Chaudhuri**, **Sarat kumer Roy**.—Poet Tagore and such well-schooled connoisseurs as **Dr. Abanindranath Tagore**, **Ramananda Chatterji** and **Lalit kumar Banerji** have also devoted their professional pens to amuse and instruct them.

#### (n) Books of Travel.

Books of travel not only enliven the imagination with engaging sketches of new lands but also engender a spirit of bold adventure and a broad catholicity of outlook. **Jadunath Sarvadhikary's** *Tirtha Brahman*, published of late by the Sahitya Parishad, is perhaps the first book of travel in our language. It gives, in the form of a diary, a graphic account of Indian life and thought more than half a century ago. **Jaladhar Sen's** *Himaloya* is a travel-classic and **Indu madhab Mallik's** *China Bhraman* and *Bilat Bhraman* are well-known works. **Satyendra-nath Tagore's** *Bombai Prabas* gives a fascinating glimpse into the inner life of a section of our

countrymen and is crowded with vivid vignettes of varied types of men and things. Those who wish for any information about the first Indian Civilian will find the book of special interest. **Chandrasekhar Sen's** *Bhupradakshin* and **Dharnikanta Lahiri Chaudhuri's** *Bharat Bhraman* are delightful works. Last though not least, **Sir Devaprasad Sarvadhikary's** *Europe Tin Mas* gives a vivid account of the varied experiences of a distinguished Indian in Europe. A passing reference is also due to Rabindranath's *Europe Prabasisr Patra*, Vivekananda's *Paribrajak* and Rames Dutt's account of travels in England, which contain a good deal of knowable information.

### (o) Newspapers.

"In these times, we fight for ideas, and newspapers are our fortresses." (Heine) The first Bengali newspaper *Bengal Gazette* was started by **Gangadhar Bhattacharya** in 1816. \* It was current for a year and its monthly subscription was Re 1. The *Samachar Darpan* was

\* Whether the paper existed at all is doubted in some quarters. A glance at the list of Bengali newspapers and periodicals, submitted by Rev. J. Long to the Government in 1855, will dispel the doubt.

under the editorship of J. Marshman. It was patronised by Government and was in existence for 21 years. Its monthly subscription was Re 1. **Raja Rammohan Roy** started the *Sanbad Kaumudi* in 1819. **Bhabanicharan Bondopadhaya** assisted the Raja in conducting the paper, but he cut off all connections therewith when the Raja took up his pen against the practice of the *Sati*. He started another paper *Samachar Chandrika* which had a run for many years. The *Sanbad Kaumudi* had a pretty long life. A host of journals followed these in quick succession between 1825 and 1858 of which none—with one or two exceptions, if any—is extant today. **Iswarchandra Gupta's** *Sanbad Pravakar* (1830) and **Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan's** *Soma Prakas* (1858) were the most ably edited of these papers. **Akshayakumer Dutt**, **Rangalal Banerji**, **Dinabandhu Mitra**, **Bankimchandra Chatterji**, **Dwarkanath Roy**—quite a galaxy of brilliant writers—contributed to the columns of the *Pravakar*, which had a useful career for 25 years. **Dwarkanath** rescued Bengali journalism from the Slough of Despond—the lowest depth of degradation to which it had sunk between 1817 and 1858. His *Soma Prakas* contained no

trace of obscene or malicious articles, which vitiating the columns of most of the Bengali journals just before it saw the light. The *Hindu Ranjika* of Rajshahi—one of the oldest of our mofussil organs—has been in existence for upwards of 55 years.

Of the present-day Bengali newspapers—mostly weeklies—some are very powerful, though none of them can vie with the best English journals of the day, whether edited by Indians or Anglo-Indians, in intrinsic excellence. Nothing can be more lamentable. No nation can rise to prosperity and greatness which has no ‘national’ organ in the fullest sense of the term.

### (v) Periodicals.

The first Bengali periodical *Dik Darshan* was started by the Missionaries of Serampur in 1818. Illustrated articles on literary, scientific and antiquarian topics graced its columns. **Rammohan Roy** started the *Brahman Sebadhi* in 1821 and crossed swords therein with the Missionaries. **Ramchandra Mitra**, Professor of the Hindu College, started in 1831 the *Jnanodaya*

in which papers of antiquarian, biographical and scientific interest regularly appeared. The students of the Hindu College started in 1832 the *Bijnan Sebadi* under the editorship of **Ganga-charan Sen**. **Akshyakumer Dutt** started the *Vidya Darsan* in 1842 but cut off all connections therewith in the subsequent year, as he was put in charge of the *Tatwabodhini Patrika*, which he edited for 12 years with consummate ability. **Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar**, **Madanmohan Tarkalankar** and others started the *Sarbasubhakar Patrika* in 1850 and **Rajendralal Mitra** the *Bibidhartha Sangraha* in 1851, which had a successful run for several years. In 1872 appeared Bankim's *Banga Darsan*, a monthly magazine devoted to original subjects of every description—philosophical, scientific, historical, literary and critical. Some of Bankim's best novels *Bisabriksha* *Krishnakanter Will*, *Rajani*, *Chandrasekhar*—graced its pages. It eclipsed the fame of all the previous periodicals and opened up a vista of new literary progress in the country.

Almost all the foregoing papers are no longer in existence. **Ramananda Chatterji's Prabasi**

is the most ably edited and has the largest circulation among the present-day periodicals. Next follow the *Bangabani*, the *Basumati*, the *Manasi o Marmabani*, the *Bharatbarsa*, the *Bharati* etc.

#### (g) Mahomedan Writers.

The names of eleven Mahomedan poets figure in anthologies of Vaishnava lyrics and Poet Aloyal penned more than two centuries and a half ago, some poems of which one—*Padmabati*, a work of free translation of Malik Mahammad's Hindi poem *Padmabat*—is a work of acknowledged literary merit. The present-day Mahomedans of Bengal are taking a keen and active interest in their mother tongue, which may lead to excellent results later on. Masaraf Hossain, author of *Bisad Sindhu*, Abdul Karim, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Akram Khan, Mozammel Huq and Golam Mostafa are some of the notable writers among them. May their number gradually increase!

### 4. THE DRAMA.

Dramaturgy in Ancient India reached the highwater mark of perfection. The dramas of

Bhas, Kalidas, Bhababhuti and a host of other Sanskrit writers still excite the admiration of eminent scholars in far-off lands, and Bharata's well-known work on dramaturgy shows what a beautiful plan of building the stage and the auditorium with all the paraphernalia of musical establishment was devised by our distant fore fathers. Political thralldom gradually toned down the enthusiasm of the Hindus till in the 18th century all their precious heritage was but a thing of the past.

In Bengali Literature, there were properly speaking no dramas before the 19th century. The musical diversion of the people then consisted in balladic and rhapsodical performances known as *Yatra*, *Katha*, and in other logomachic entertainments such as *Kabi*, *Panchali*, *Tarja* and *Akdai*. Such works of the 16th and the 17th century as **Lochan Das' Jagannath Ballava**, **Jadunath Das's Bidagdha Madhab Premadas's Chiatanya Chandrodaya Kaumudi** and **Debakinandan's Gopal Bijay Natak** pass indeed for 'dramas,' but they resemble neither the old Sanskrit nor the modern Bengali plays. They are throughout written in rhyme and re-



semble what passes at present for **Monohar Sahi Kirtan**. They were never staged.

Before we come to real Bengali dramas, a passing reference may be made to *Gita'vinayas* or indigenous plays of Bengal. **Krishna Kamal Goswami** of Bhajanhat (Nadia), to whom reference has been previously made, **Govinda Adhikari** and others wrote volumes of such popular dramas on religious subjects (somewhat resembling the English Miracle and Cycle plays) **Krishnakamal's** dramas, specially his *Rai Um-maḍini*, *Nimai Sanyas* and *Swapna Bilas* are singularly beautiful and would repay perusal even in these days. **Dr. Nishikanta Chatterji** englished some of his plays in the United Kingdom. They present through a succession of tender and touching pictures some lofty moral and spiritual ideals and are written from beginning to end in a fascinating style. This branch of our literature was further developed by **Mati-lal Roy**, **Rasiklal Chakravarti**, **Ahibhusan Bhattacharya**, **Annadaprasad Ghosal**, **Haripada Chtaterji** and **Mukunda Das**. \* The works of

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\* A special note is due to his plays which make a remarkable departure from productions of the kind in this that they deal with momentous problems of the day—Hindu-Moslem unity, Primary Education, eradication of many long-standing social evils, necessity of introducing weaving and spinning in every Indian home etc.

these play-wrights abound in humanising ideas and sentiments and are enthusiastically played on festival days and other important occasions before vast crowds of eager people in all parts of Bengal Presidency. These plays are generally performed under a canopy in open as well as closed spaces both in the day and night time. Some of the plays of the most recent origin have, to a great extent, been modelled on the Western drama.

The genesis of the modern Bengali stage is fraught with considerable interest. The Old Playhouse in Lal Bazar, established a few years before the siege of Calcutta (1756), was the first English theatre in Calcutta. The first adaptation of European dramatic form to the Bengali stage can be traced so far back as 1795 when a Russian adventurer **Herasin Lebedeff**, built 'by permission of the Hon. the Governor-General' an Indian theatre in Dom Tollah' (in the centre of Calcutta) on which the Bengali translations of two English works—*The Disguise* and *Love is the Best Doctor*—were played with the help of "native actors of both sexes." There is no record of any other Bengali play till

1831 when *Vidya Sundar* was staged at a heavy expenditure in the house of Nabinchandra Basu in Shambazar. Many English plays and English translations of Sanskrit dramas were staged in the lodgings of many private gentlemen in Calcutta from 1832 to the middle of the 19th century. *Kulin Kuli Sirvasu* was the first original Bengali play to be staged in 1857 at the residence of Jayaram Basak in Chakradanga, Pathuriaghat. The first public theatre of Bengal—*The National Theatre* was started in Calcutta in 1871 through the joint efforts of **Girish Ch. Ghose** and **Ardhendusekhar Mustafi**.

The first Bengali drama written on the Western plan was *Bhadrarjun* (1825) by **Tara charan Sikdar**. \* He totally dispensed with the *Prastabana* or prelude of the Sanskrit play as absolutely unnecessary and introduced 'scenes' ( ' Sanjogsthal ' ) in every Act—a departure from the old classical rules. Then followed the *Bhanumati Chittabilas* of **Harchandra Ghosh**, which was a dull imitation of Shakespeare's

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\* Vide Saratchandra Ghosal's illuminating paper on the play in Magh number of the *Narayana* ( 1321 B. S. )

*Merchant of Venice*. \* Closely on its heels followed *Kulin Kula Sarcaswa*, *Nacanatoka*, *Beni Sanhar*, *Malati Malaha* and other performances of **Ramnarayan Tarkaratna**—"Natuke **Ramnarayan**" as he was popularly called—which ushered in a new era in the dramatic literature of Bengal. The first of these plays was a prize composition. A benevolent zemindar of North Bengal **Kalichandra Roy Choudhuri**—announced in the columns of the *Rangpur Bazarbaha* a prize of Rs. 50 to be awarded to one who would within six months of the notice, write a drama with the title of *Kulin Kula Sarcaswa* holding up the custom of kulinism and polygamy to ridicule and contempt. Ramnarayan produced the play in 1857 and became the honorable recipient of the prize. *Kulin Kula Sarcaswa* is divided into six Acts without any 'scene' and the names † of its *Dramatis Personae* indicate what stuff they are made of. It was staged with singular scenic pomp shortly after its publication

\* Harachandra wrote two or three other plays one of which was an adaptation of *Romeo Juliet*.

† 'Dharmasil' ( A virtuous man ) 'Abhalychandra' ( A most ill-behaved person ) etc.

and gave rise to high expectations in the public mind for further original Bengali plays. *Beni Sanhar* a translation from Sanskrit and *Nātak* a prize composition dealing with the evils of polygamy shortly followed and had a successful run on the stage. The later plays of Ramnarayan contain 'scenes,' which are prominent by their absence in *Kulin Kula Sarvaswa*.

To Ramnarayan belonged the glory of producing the earliest original plays in our language. But these works with the antiquated diction of the Sanskrit drama were more classical in trend and tendency than modern. It was reserved for **Michal Madhsudhan Dutt** to bear on the Bengali drama his vast knowledge of occidental dramaturgy and revolutionise the tastes and tendencies of the play-goers.

His *Sarmistha*, composed on the model of English plays, was represented on the Belgachia theatre in 1859 with great scenic splendour. It was highly appreciated by all but a handful of orthodox pandits. Its simple colloquial style afforded a striking contrast to the learned style of Pandit Ramnarayan Tarkaratna, whose fame was considerably eclipsed after its appearance. It was follow-

ed by two plays and two farces which were favourably received by the public. The mythical quarrel of Juno, Pallas and Venus has been exquisitely adapted in one of these plays—*Padmabati* and the tragic fate of a Rajput princess has been depicted in the other. “*Krishna Kumari*” is the first tragedy in our language, all the previous plays (like Sanskrit dramas) having a happy ending. The songs of the play were composed by Madhusudan’s great patron Maharaja **Jatindramohan Tagore** and it had a very successful run in The National Theatre and The Bengal Theatre.

Madhusudan may be rightly regarded as the founder of the modern Bengali drama. \*

After Madhusudan, we come to **Dinabandhu Mitra** (1829-1873). one of the glorious “literary triumvirate” —Michael, Bankim and Dinabandhu. Born in 1829 at Chaubaria in the District of Jessore, he was at first educated at the Hugli College and then at the Hindu College, Calcutta

\* It is a pity that his plays are not ~~not~~ occasionally acted on the stage. Calcutta play-houses can often stage heaps of nonsense, yet they do not see their way to perform the first remarkable plays in the Bengali language.

and after the College career was over, he entered the service of the Government in the Postal Department. He was entrusted with making postal arrangements for the field service in the Lushai Expedition (1871), which he very admirably managed. In private life, his consortings with friends and associates (like Bankim and Nabinchandra) were uniformly characterised by a singular sweetness and geniality.

, Dinabandhu's principal drama Nil Darpan (The Indigo Planting Mirror), published anonymously from Dacca in 1858, created a wonderful commotion in the country. Rev. James Long, a noble type of Englishman, published an English rendering of the play (by Michael Madhusudan Dutt) in 1861, for which he was sentenced to one month's imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 1,000. The play was at that time translated into other European languages also.

As a work of dramatic art, Nil Darpan is an acknowledged master-piece, containing vivid, life-like pictures of men and women. Dinabandhu had travelled widely in indigo-planting zones and observed with his own eyes the oppression of poor planters by white capitalists. Naturally

enough he was able to hold the mirror upto nature and take the whole country by storm. Bankim-chandra, the great novelist and literary critic, who had in his official career occasionally witnessed the misery of the indigo planters, remarks in his appreciation of Nil Darpan that some of its episodes are faithful reproductions of what took place in real life. The style, design and characterisation of the play are all worthy of a master-dramatist and it had a very successful run on the stage.

Bankim is justified in calling the drama "Bengal's Uncle Tom's Cabin." Did it not like Stowe's splendid performance, which removed slavery from the Negro world, remove to an appreciable extent slavery from the indigo-planting zone?

Among other dramatic works of the master Sadhabar Ekadasi, exposing the disastrous effects of drinking, Jamai Barik, exhibiting the unhappy position of a Kulin son-in-law, Nabin Tapaswini and Lilabati pointing out other plague-spots in our social life are the most remarkable.

In Biye Pagle Buro, Dinabandhu has powerfully exposed the comico-tragedy of the unjust



custom that allows an old octogenarian widower to marry a young virgin of twelve or thirteen. The characters of Jaladhar and Jagadamba in Nabin Tapaswini are adapted from Shakespeare's Merry Wives of Windsor. Truth, life and lively humour there are in abundance in all of these plays, but there are also occasional touches of vulgarity side by side, similar to those which defile some plays of Ben Jonson (Volpone, for instance).

'Dinabandhu has as fine a sense of the truly pathetic as of the truly ludicrous. His plays played a prominent part in popularising the early Bengali stage. Girishchandra Ghosh has freely admitted this in the dedication of his Sasti ki Santi to him.

Dinabandhu also penned two volumes of minor poems, some of which were read with delight in his days.

Grishchandra Ghosh (1843-1911), 'father of the Bengali stage' came of a Kayastha family of Bagh-Bazar, Calcutta and having read up to the Entrance class took to the stage in the prime of his life. He acted one after another as the guiding genius of almost all the dramatic associations

of Calcutta—The Great National Theatre, (the first public stage of Bengal), The Star Theatre, The Emerald Theatre, The Classic Theatre, The Minerva Theatre—and produced more than three scores of plays. He was in private life a follower of the great Ramkrishna Paramahansa to whose magnetic influence may be traced the genesis of wholesome religious ideas streaming through some of his best works.

Girischandra's dramas may be broadly divided into five well-defined groups—social, Puranic and historical plays, musical operas and adaptations from other dramatists. Some of his plays—such as *Bilwamangal*, showing the wonderful transformation in the soul of a damned drunkard, moving from a lower region of darkness and sin to a higher region of light and love, *Balidan* powerfully exhibiting the heart-rending scenes which the question of dowry has created in every Hindu home, *Prasulla*, presenting through a series of vivid life-like pictures the average domestic life of Modern Bengal, *Grihalakshmi*, *Pandab Gaurab*, *Jana*, *Buddha*, *Tapobal*, *Sankaracharya*, *Chaitanya Lila*, *Chhatrapati Sibaji*—are superb successes from the histrionic and literary points

of view and deserve to be ranked with some of the masterpieces of the Western play wrights. Take the play of Balidan. As an artistic representation of a seamy, shady side of Hindu

“অন্যদের সমাজে কন্যার শিতার এই পবিত্রতা! ঘরে ঘরে এই শোচনীয় অবস্থা! দোখার পুত্রবধূর আত্মহত্যা, কোথাও কন্যা পরিহাস! এতিগৃহে দারিদ্র্য! সংসার চক্রে উপর এই শোচনীয় দশ গৃহে গৃহে নিরাশ বিবাহজন! বধ্যাশি আমার পুত্রের বিবাহে কন্যার দিহাজে পাড়ন করতে পারাছু এই না! পবিত্র উবাচ, আমাদের সমাজের এক অন্ধৃত দাঁড়—ভগবতের এক নতুন রহস্য! বাঙ্গালার বহু—মস্ত্রবান নর—কালিদাসের না।”  
“কুন্টারও মূল্য আছে কুলবালার মূল্য নাই!”—সত্যেন দত্ত

social life, it is a decided master-piece quite fit in the universality of interest and depth of passion, to be placed by King Lear. Or take the play Bilwamangal. The material here is legendary, but the inspiration that moves it throughout is that of a master-dramatist, faithfully transcribing

“I have read times out of number this drama and each time I find something new.”

—Swami Vivekananda

the imaginings and yearnings, struggles and triumphs of a sin-stained soul. It is a Bengali Faust with no metaphysical subtleties, showing

“ Whoe’er aspires unweariedly  
Is not beyond redeeming.  
And if he feels the grace of Love  
That from on High is given  
The blessed Hosts that wait above  
Shall welcome him to Heaven ”

It gives strength and consolation to many penitent hearts and leads them ‘upward and on.’ The picture of Pagalini is a unique creation of the dramatist. “ A certain tendency to insanity has always attended the opening of the religious sense in men, as if they had been blasted with excess of light ” says Emerson and no wonder, this Follower of the Gleam is off her heads. She listens to the Flute-notes of the Eternal Flute-Player in her soul and restlessly pants for union with Him :

‘যাই গো ঐ বাজায় বাঁশী প্রাণ কেনন করে,  
একনা এসে বদন কলায় দাঁড়িয়ে আছে আমার তরে ।  
বত বাঁশরী বাজায়,                      তত পথ পদান চায়  
পাগল বাঁশী ডাকে উভরায় ;  
না গেলে সে কোঁড়ে কোঁড়ে চলে যাবে মান ভরে ।’ \*

Buddha, Sankaracharya and Chaitanya Lila are pervaded by an impressive religious

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\* An English adaptation of the play ( entitled The Divine Vision ) was recently staged with success in London.

note rarerly to be met with in the best English plays. Fidelity to nature, chastity of sentiments and diction, critical insight into the nacies of individual character, ingenuity in developing plots, wit, interest and instruction—all these there are in these plays, and if Girischandra could have maintained this level of perfection in other performances, he would have been a veritable Shakespeare of our times. But unfortunately for the upkeep and popularity of the stage, he had to produce, in inordinate haste, many trite plays, which instead of adding to, detract from his reputation as a dramatist. His Bengali adaptation of Macbeth is quite worthy of the original and is in the opinion of Late **Mr. N. N. Ghosh**, Member of the Royal Society of Literature, superior to the French version of the drama. His dramatic adaptation of Meghnad Badh Kavya is also very entertaining. His Sirajuddaula, Mir Kasim and Chhatrapati Shivaji, throbbing with new pulsations of Indian national life, have been proscribed by Government. Some of his songs are very charming.

Girischandra's meteoric succes as a dramatic actor brought for him the well-merited compli-

ment. 'The Garrick of Bengal' and he is considered as the prince of Bengali dramatists by a considerable section of our intelligentsia.

Amritalal Basu (1853), manager of The Star Theatre for many years, has treated the play-going public of Bengal with a number of *bizarre* satires, mainly attacking, in a most unparliamentary manner, the Brahmo and an advanced section of the Hindu community. Such frivolous productions will be ere long consigned to oblivion, but Amritalal's Harischandra, a beautiful Puranic play, conceived in a fine, artistic vein, will continue to please the play-goer for many a long day.

Amarendranath Dutt, the distinguished dramatic actor, has very ably dramatised some novels of Bankim and Rames Chandra but has not succeeded well in other dramatic compositions of his own.

Dwizendralal Roy (1860-1913), the famous play-wright and song-writer, created the romantic drama in Bengali Literature. Descended from a respectable Brahmin family of Krishnagar, he passed the M. A. Examination of Calcutta University in English, standing first-class second in order of merit, and having pro-

ceeded to England as a State Scholar in the subsequent year, studied agriculture in Cirencester College for about a year. He came back to India as an F. R. A. S. and shortly after entered the Government service as a Settlement officer. His splendid services to the poor ryots in this connection incurred the wrath of the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, but thanks to the efforts of another noble minded English official the crisis was soon over, and afterwards he became in turn a Deputy Magistrate, the First Inspector of Excise, the Assistant Director of Agriculture and Commissioner of Excise, Bengal.

While an M. A. student of Calcutta University, Dwizendralal published the first part of his *Arya Gatha*, volumes of lyrics, some of which were really beautiful. In the United kingdom, he published a volume of English lyrics—*Lyrics of India*—which were favourably received by the British press. Shortly after his return to India, he volleyed in verse vendetta against the orthodox section of the Hindu community, which enjoined *Prayaschitta* upon him for crossing the *Kalapani*. These stinging satires created a sensation in the country. **Dwizendralal's Ashare**

and Hasir Gan, published at this time, were burlesques—a new species of composition in Bengali Literature—very much like Ingoldsby Legends. ‘Bangali Mahima’ ‘Engrejtetra’ ‘Deputy Kahini’ ‘Karnamarden’ ‘Bilat Ferta Ka Bhai’ ‘Reformed Hindus’, ‘Bishyutbarer Barbela’ ‘Sadhe ki Baba Bali,’ ‘Nandalal’ are the captions of some of the well-known poems and songs of these volumes. Some of these compositions are purely comic and some (like ‘Sadhe ki Baba Bali’) though comic in form, are tragic in spirit, causing an ineffable anguish in the heart of heart of every patriotic Indian. Dwizendralal’s masterpieces such as Sajahan, Bhisma, Parapare—were composed during his maturer years. The Swadeshi Movement that great patriotic, furor the glory whereof like a Pharos-light was the wonder and admiration of a new universe gave a great filip to his genius, the immediate outcome of which was a series of songs and plays, pulsating with insurgent and resurgent patriotic feelings.

In going through the dramas of Dwizendralal, which may be broadly divided as historical, social and Puranic, the reader will throughout



notice that unlike previous dramatists of Bengal, he writes in a picturesque style and seeks to produce stage-effects by a succession of splendid pictures of heroes and heroines (therein resembling Victor Hugo and Schiller, two powerful European dramatists of the romantic school). One great drawback of the romantic dramatist is the intense subjective and melodramatic tone of his writings, and to this charge Dwizendralal also is open. But this defect is more than made up by the beauty and charm of varied types of characterisation and the nobility and grandeur that breathe through his plays. Chandragupta the great empire-builder, Chanakya the half-atheist stern law-giver, Helen, the star-eyed Ionian Beauty

“Fair Helena; who more engilds the night  
Than all yon fierie oes and eies of light.”

Sajahan, the Indian Lear, Aurangjib the shrewd emperor-diplomat, Durgadas the self-less patriot, Pratap Sinha, the born fighter for freedom, Nurjahan the astute queen-diplomat, Manasi the self-less lover of humanity have been delineated with the Shakespearean delicacy of touch. Dwizendralal chose as the theme of each play a momentous historical or Puranic incident, wove

it into plots and by-plots and read into it a noble modern significance through contrasted types of gorgeous character. Of him it may be truly said that "he uttered nothing base." But one thing should be noted. Hutton says of Scott, "The very quality in his verse which makes it seize so powerfully on the imaginations of plain bold adventurous men often, makes it hammer fatiguingly against the brain of those who need the relief of a wider horizon and a richer world." And in the manner of Hutton, one may well say of Dwizendralal, "The very excess of brilliance of his thought which captivates a section of play-goers and readers does not please those who seek more of life than of the glamour of ideology in plays." Traces of the Western influence are occasionally perceptible in his works.

Dwizendralal is a great nation-building force. Like Bankim's novels, Vivekananda's religious writings and Rabindranath's lyrics, his songs and plays will ever exercise a powerful influence upon

his countrymen. Some of his national songs-

“বলিও না তোর দিবা-চন্দ্রোদয়ে  
 যেবে আছে বাজি আঁধার ঘোর।  
 সেটে যাবে মেঘ নবীন গুনিয়া  
 ভরাহবে আবার ললাটে তোর।  
 আমরা দুচার না তোর দৈত  
 মাতুষ আমরা নহিত মেঘ।  
 দেবী আমার সাধনা-পানার  
 সর্গ আমার অ-মার দেশ।

are sung in almost every Bengali home.

Dwizendralal has evolved many novel tunes which have gained enormous popularity. To those who prize energy and inspiration as essential qualities of poems and songs and pore over dramas for their picturesque style, splendour of character-delineation and grandeur of sentiments, Dwizendralal will ever remain a living fountain of ineffable felicity.

A considerable volume of educated public opinion allocates Dwizendralal the highest place among the Bengali dramatists. This opinion is perhaps unduly obsessed by the romantic glamour of his thoughts.

Kshirode Prasad Vidyavinode (1863) has produced a number of plays of which a couple deserve a prominent notice *Alibaba*, an eminently entertaining musical opera and *Pratapaditya*, a powerful historical drama. The keynote of the play is struck where the last great Bengali of lion-heart invokes the aid of his Guardian Deity for the annihilation of the enemies of his country and community. A spirit of star-tipped patriotism pervades the play from cover to cover and some of its passages have been censored by Government.

Monomohan Roy has produced a beautiful historical play *Rijiya* occasionally illumined by fine touches of poetry, and **Monomohan Goswami** has left behind him two social dramas *Sansar* and *Samaj* which are faithful reproductions of real life.

Of the younger dramatists of the day, almost all have run mad after writing historical plays in the manner of Dwizendralal. These plays are but poor imitations of that eminent dramatist possessing all his mannerisms but very few of his finer qualities.

Some of the latest plays (like *Karnarjun* and *Sita*) exhibit a tendency on the part of playwrights to turn from history to the golden treasury of Ancient Hindu Epics for themes of dramatic art. A breezy vivacity of dialogue in the manner of Ibsen and Shaw forms a novel feature of the plays of the hour.

### 5. Conclusion.

Tagore's literary labours have received international recognition. There are other Bengali poets and artists, whose fame has overleaped parochial bounds and who deserve to be counted on the brilliant beadroll of international writers.

But Bengali Literature has so long blossomed almost in a parched soil. Neither the administrative authorities nor the 'Varsity of Calcutta nor the aristocratic (and a considerable section of the educated) classes of our country have lent it any substantial support. Look at the curricula of the Calcutta and Dacca University. Far from being the medium of instruction in our schools and colleges, it is the only branch of study which is thoroughly neglected in all educational institutions.

Nothing can be more lamentable. The future greatness of a nation depends greatly upon the proper development of its national literature, and if this national literature of Bengal is thus wantonly neglected, sterility and stagnation will come over our national life and thought sooner or later. **Sir Ashutosh Mukherji** laid an emphatic stress on this point in his splendid presidential address in the Rungpur session of the North Bengal Literary Conference. We call upon all well-wishers of the country to give the matter their serious consideration. Below are given a few humble suggestions for the further embellishment of our literature.

1. As far as practicable, Bengali should at once be made the medium of instruction in all schools and colleges of Bengal Presidency. "It is **Sir Rabindranath's** strong conviction that while English should be skilfully and thoroughly taught as a second language, the chief medium of instruction in schools (and even colleges up to the stage of the University degree) should be the mother tongue. He has four reasons for this belief ; first, it is through his mother tongue that every man learns the deepest lessons of

life ; second, because some of those pupils who have a just claim to higher education cannot master the English language ; third, because many of those who do not acquire English fail to achieve true proficiency in it and yet, in the attempt to learn a language so difficult to a Bengali, spend too large a part of independent thought and observation ; fourth, because a training conducted chiefly through the mother tongue would lighten the load of education for girls, whose deeper culture is of highest importance to us.”—

Sadler Commission Report, Vol I.

2. A strong Board with Poet Tagore or **Dr. B. N. Seal** as President and specialists in different subjects as members should be immediately formed for the compilation of suitable text-books in Bengali for the different branches of study in Arts and Science.

8. Adequate funds should be collected—say, four or five lacs of rupees at the start and new degrees and scholarships should be created for the encouragement of the best writers of of these text-books. Government may also be approached (and efforts be made through the

Legislature) to secure an annual grant of Rs. 25000 at the minimum for the purpose.

4. **Bangiya Sahitya Parishad** (Bengal Academy of Literature) should be incorporated with Calcutta University (of course in a way that its independence is not interfered with) and the task of selecting Bengali text-books for schools and colleges should be made over to it.

5. The present system of setting two papers in English and one paper in Bengali in the Matriculation Examination and three papers in English and one paper in Bengali in the Intermediate and B. A. Examinations should be quite reversed.

The idea that underlies the fore-going suggestions is plain. **The image of the mother should be put in the step mother's hall.** That is the best way to national self-realisation.

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# ERRATA.

Page.	Line.	Mistake.	Correction.
12	7	string	spring
26	19	Insert " of " before " his "	
27	2	insert 'ধন' before	'ও ছুটী'
27	9	insert 'ধাক' before	'ঘরে'
29	20	রাধানাম	রাধানাথ
39	6	Bankra	Bankura
44	22	Subsequent	Subsequent
46	25	took	tooth
47	16	metaplors	metaphors
51	14	indo	into
54	9	should be 'চরণ কালো ভ্রমর কালো কালোয় কালো মিশে ধ্বল'	
55	14	indegenous	indigenous
61	6	wist	wits
61	9	futher	further
64	18	kenote	keynote
64	20	dramatic	dramatis
83	19	insert 'and' after ' India '	
85	25	insert ' the ' before ' honour '	
92	22	if	of
116	5	দেখাইলে	দেখাইগে
117	25	Bharati's	Bharabi's
124	19	Jurisprudenace	Jurisprudence
149	5	two	too
149	11	spoke	spake
150	19	husband's	husband's
160	17	weilder	wielder
202	9	through	though



